BOOKLOVERS EDITION

The Works of

CHARLES DICKENS

With the Life of Dickens

By

FRANK T. MARZIALS, JOHN FORSTER, MAMIE DICKENS, and ADOLPHUS W. WARD

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THE UNIVERSITY SOCIETY
NEW YORK

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J. C. Armytage

CHARLES DICKENS.

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TO THE MEMORY OF

CHARLES DICKENS

AND TO ALL WHO ENDEAVOUR FOR

THE SPREAD OF HIS HUMANISING INFLUENCE

THESE VOLUMES ARE DEDICATED BY

THE PUBLISHERS

PUBLISHERS' PREFACE.

At the time of Charles Dickens's birth (1812), Walter Scott, who for some years had enjoyed high favour as a poet, was seeing signs of his waning popularity, and the partial eclipse of his fame by the rising reputation of Lord Byron. Scott soon turned his talents to another kind of literature, "with which for ten or twelve years he surprised and enchanted the world." This new career began with the publication of "Waverley" in 1814. When Scott had become the chief figure in contemporary British letters, Dickens, who in turn was to surpass him in popularity, was a poor boy engaged in pasting labels on pots of blacking in a dilapidated warehouse beside the Thames. Passing from drudgery and neglect to be reporter, critic, magazinist, and playwright, he became at a bound, with the publication of "Pickwick," an idol of the English people and the most discussed of living authors.

From this time the career of Dickens was an almost continuous record of popular success. His books had a marvellous sale, and his readers were a vast multitude. It has been well said that, if not a great event in literature, he was yet a great event in history. He established and edited a periodical with what at that time was the largest circulation in the world. His readings in interpretation of his works added largely to his fortune, and even enhanced his fame. As a speaker he became noted for eloquence and was in constant demand on important occasions. For more than thirty years he was one of the most conspicuous and, in spite of much detraction, one of the most lauded among public characters, and at his death men of eminence, and the English nation itself, paid him honours befitting such celebrity.

At this remove it is possible to pass a more deliberate judgment upon Dickens, and after all fair abatements of adulation have been allowed, it must be recognised that

what at present is called a "Dickens revival" is but a renewed confirmation of the old allegiance, giving increased assurance of his permanent position in literature. The reiterated complaints of unevenness, exaggeration, and the like are less and less heard as competent criticism more intelligently regards the versatility and amplitude of his work and shows, notwithstanding frequent fluctuations of power, the constancy of his informing genius and spirit. In a survey of the great body of his work minor blemishes are lost to sight. Long ago he was acclaimed by such fellow-craftsmen as Carlyle, Landor, Thackeray, and Irving. Now he has won the later critics to join his popular constituency. Even in the few years since the opening of the present century a mass of literature has appeared that, added to the earlier biographical, bibliographical, and critical writings relating to him, must suffice to make Dickens fully known to the world and to insure the perpetuity of his fame.

There is no other literary tradition quite like the Dickens tradition. His fancies, his characters, his turns of phrase have seasoned our speech. What an unequalled gallery that of his fifteen hundred portraits! "If Dickens brought in a man merely to carry a letter, he had time for a touch or two, and made him a giant." Who can fail to recognise his matchless powers of observation, his unflagging narrative gift, his ever-buoyant humour, whether in farce or high comedy, his intolerance of sham and wrong, his good cheer, his genuine enthusiasm for humanity, all lavished on the world in a style so peculiarly his own that even at the dawn of his career he was happily called "the inimitable"! Yet in what quarter of the world has he not had imitators, who, whatever their shortcomings, have still in some measure helped to propagate his benign influence among mankind? "To give so much pleasure," says Charles Eliot Norton, "to add so much to the happiness of the world, by his writings, as Mr. Dickens has succeeded in doing, is a felicity that has never been attained in such full measure by any other author."

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This edition is believed to contain nearly two thousand pages of matter not to be found in other editions generally available to American readers. In the composite Life of Dickens the publishers have set before the reader the story of his varied activities, the portraiture of the man in different aspects as observed by the several biographers, and their estimates of his works, these estimates being supplemented by those of distinguished critics in the essays that follow. The biography by Marzials is given in full; the abridgment of Forster's contains much that is autobiographic, consisting of Dickens's incomparable letters to Forster; the intimate account of her father by Mamie Dickens adds a more familiar interest to the subject; and the chapters from Ward's "Dickens" combine with biographical narrative critical observations of the highest value for discriminating readers. Where these writers, and where others, represented in the extra matter herewith given, overlap each other, with occasional repetition of incident or reference, they furnish comparative aids to Dickensian interpretations. This volume of independent narratives and judgments should prove the best of all reading as a general introduction to the full edition.

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It is said that the stories of England's favourite novelist owe their popularity mainly to the fact that they appeal to the "masses" rather than to the "classes." This is probably true, for it was that vast majority of the "world's workers" to which Dickens extended his sympathy, being prompt to recognise in its midst noble instances of worth, manliness, and humanity which are there so often manifested. He loved his fellow-men, and by means of his wonderful romances did more to increase the social happiness and morality of the humbler members of the community than any writer of his time. "If ever man left the world better than he found it," remarks Mr. James Payn, "it was Charles Dickens." That being so, Thackeray's asseveration was a just one, when, on referring to his brother novelist, he spoke of him in a most reverent tone as "the Jesus Christ of Literature."

It is difficult to realise to what extent Literature would have suffered if the novels of Dickens had never seen the light, or "to conceive" [quoting Mr. Andrew Lang] "how poor the world of fancy would be, 'how dispeopled of her dreams,' if, in some ruin of the social system, the books of Dickens were lost!" The principal characters he created are ever remembered as distinct types, while his phraseology constitutes part of our language; he is so eminently in request for fancies and general illustrations, that (as Professor Masson has pointed out) even those who are for writing him down find them indispensable, and are ever ready to avail themselves of some Dickensian touch of humour or pathos, the expression of which flashes on the mind the thought which is intended to be conveyed.

Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes used to say of Dickens: "He is the greatest of all of them. Such fertility, such Shakespearean breadth—there is enough of him; you feel as you do when you see the ocean." The late Mr. William Morris considered that the author of "Pickwick" is immeasurably ahead of the novelists of our generation, an opinion fully endorsed by the Poet Laureate, when, in 1870, *he wrote: "He is unquestionably as far above all other English novelists as Shakespeare is above all other English dramatists." In Mr. Swinburne's "Studies in Prose and Poetry" we read: "Dickens, I am happy to think, can hardly have had a more cordial and appreciative*

admirer than Mr. Jowett" [*the late Professor Jowett, of University renown*]. *"Tennyson, Browning, and Carlyle were all still among us when I once happened to ask him whom he thought the first of living English writers. He hesitated for a minute or so, and then replied, 'If Dickens were alive, I shouldn't hesitate.'" Seldom has a more sympathetic tribute been penned in honour of any author than that by Mr. Swinburne himself, whose lines addressed to Charles Dickens will be found in his volume of verse entitled "Tristram of Lyonesse and Other Poems":*

Chief in thy generation born of men;
Whom English praise acclaimed as English born,
With eyes that matched the world-wide eyes of morn
For gleam of tears or laughter, tenderest then
When thoughts of children warmed their light, or when
Reverence of age with love and labour worn,
Or godlike pity fired with godlike scorn,
Shot through them flame that winged thy swift live pen.

FREDERIC G. KITTON.

CONTENTS.

THE LIFE OF CHARLES DICKENS.

BY

FRANK T. MARZIALS.

CHAPTER I.

EDUCATION is a kind of lottery in which there are good and evil chances, and some men draw blanks and other men draw prizes. And in saying this I do not use the word education in any restricted sense, as applying exclusively to the course of study in school or college; nor certainly, when I speak of prizes, am I thinking of scholarships, exhibitions, fellowships. By education I mean the whole set of circumstances which go to mould a man's character during the apprentice years of his life; and I call that a prize when those circumstances have been such as to develop the man's powers to the utmost, and to fit him to do best that of which he is best capable. Looked at in this way, Charles Dickens's education, however untoward and unpromising it may often have seemed while in the process, must really be pronounced a prize of value quite inestimable.

His father, John Dickens, held a clerkship in the Navy Pay Office, and was employed in the Portsmouth Dockyard when little Charles first came into the world, at Landport, in Portsea, on February 7, 1812. Wealth can never have been one of the familiar friends of the household, nor plenty have always sat at its board. Charles had one elder sister, and six other brothers and sisters were afterwards added to the family; and with eight chil-

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tion bills shed their baleful shadow on his life, and duns grew many and furious, he became altogether immersed in mean money troubles, and suffered the son who was to shed such lustre on his name to remain for a time without the means of learning, and to sink first into a little household drudge, and then into a mere warehouse boy.

So little Charles, aged from eleven to twelve, first blacked boots, and minded the younger children, and ran messages, and effected the family purchases—which can have been no pleasant task in the then state of the family credit—and made very close acquaintance with the inside of the pawnbrokers' shops, and with the purchasers of second-hand books, disposing, among other things, of the little store of books he loved so well; and then, when his father was imprisoned, ran more messages hither and thither, and shed many childish tears in his father's company—the father doubtless regarding the tears as a tribute to his eloquence, though Heaven knows, there were other things to cry over besides his sonorous periods. After which a connection, James Lamert by name, who had lived with the family before they moved from Camden Town to Gower Street, and was manager of a worm-eaten, rat-riddled blacking business, near old Hungerford Market, offered to employ the lad, on a salary of some six shillings a week, or thereabouts. The duties which commanded these high emoluments consisted of the tying up and labelling of blacking pots. At first Charles, in consideration probably of his relationship to the manager, was allowed to do his tying, clipping, and pasting in the counting-house. But soon this arrangement fell through, as it naturally would, and he descended to the companionship of the other lads, similarly employed, in the warehouse below. They were not bad boys, and one of them, who bore the name of Bob Fagin, was very kind to the poor little better-nurtured outcast, once, in a sudden attack of illness, applying hot blacking-bottles to his side with much tenderness. But, of course, they were rough and quite uncultured, and the sensitive, bookish, imaginative child felt that there was something uncongenial and degrading in being compelled to associate with them. Nor, though he had already sufficient strength of character to learn to do his work well, did he ever regard

BIRTHPLACE OF CHARLES DICKENS.
Now known as No. 387 Mile End Terrace, Commercial Road, Portsmouth.

the work itself as anything but unsuitable, and almost discreditable. Indeed it may be doubted whether the iron of that time did not unduly rankle and fester as it entered into his soul, and whether the scar caused by the wound was altogether quite honourable. He seems to have felt, in connection with his early employment in a warehouse, a sense of shame such as would be more fittingly associated with the commission of an unworthy act. That he should not have habitually referred to the subject in after life, may readily be understood. But why he should have kept unbroken silence about it for long years, even with his wife, even with so very close a friend as Forster, is less clear. And in the terms used, when the revelation was finally made to Forster, there has always, I confess, appeared to me to be a tone of exaggeration. "My whole nature," he says, "was so penetrated with grief and humiliation, . . . that even now, famous and caressed and happy, I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children; even that I am a man, and wander desolately back to that time of my life." And again: "From that hour until this, at which I write, no word of that part of my childhood, which I have now gladly brought to a close, has passed my lips to any human being. . . . I have never, until I now impart it to this paper, in any burst of confidence with any one, my own wife not excepted, raised the curtain I then dropped, thank God." Great part, perhaps the greatest part, of Dickens's success as a writer, came from the sympathy and power with which he showed how the lower walks of life no less than the higher are often fringed with beauty. I have never been able to entirely divest myself of a slight feeling of the incongruous in reading what he wrote about the warehouse episode in his career.

At first, when he began his daily toil at the blacking business, some poor dregs of family life were left to the child. His father was at the Marshalsea. But his mother and brothers and sisters were, to use his own words, "still encamped, with a young servant girl from Chatham workhouse, in the two parlours in the emptied house in Gower Street North." And there he lived with them, in much "hugger-mugger," merely taking his humble midday meal in nomadic fashion, on his own account. Soon, however, his position became even more forlorn. The

paternal creditors proved insatiable. The gipsy home in Gower Street had to be broken up. Mrs. Dickens and the children went to live at the Marshalsea. Little Charles was placed under the roof—it cannot be called under the care—of a "reduced old lady," dwelling in Camden Town, who must have been a clever and prophetic old lady if she anticipated that her diminutive lodger would one day give her a kind of indirect unenviable immortality by making her figure, under the name of "Mrs. Pipchin," in "Dombey and Son." Here the boy seems to have been left almost entirely to his own devices. He spent his Sundays in the prison, and, to the best of his recollection, his lodgings at "Mrs. Pipchin's" were paid for. Otherwise, he "found himself," in childish fashion, out of the six or seven weekly shillings, breakfasting on two pennyworth of bread and milk, and supping on a penny loaf and a bit of cheese, and dining hither and thither, as his boy's appetite dictated—now, sensibly enough, on *à la mode* beef or a saveloy; then, less sensibly, on pudding; and anon not dining at all, the wherewithal having been expended on some morning treat of cheap stale pastry. But are not all these things, the lad's shifts and expedients, his sorrows and despair, his visits to the public-house, where the kindly publican's wife stoops down to kiss the pathetic little face—are they not all written in "David Copperfield"? And if so be that I have a reader unacquainted with that peerless book, can I do better than recommend him, or her, to study therein the story of Dickens's life at this particular time?

At last the child's solitude and sorrows seem to have grown unbearable. His fortitude broke down. One Sunday night he appealed to his father, with many tears, on the subject, not of his employment, which he seems to have accepted at the time manfully, but of his forlornness and isolation. The father's kind, thoughtless heart was touched. A back attic was found for Charles near the Marshalsea, at Lant Street, in the Borough—where Bob Sawyer, it will be remembered, afterwards invited Mr. Pickwick to that disastrous party. The boy moved into his new quarters with the same feeling of elation as if he had been entering a palace.

The change naturally brought him more fully into the prison circle. He used to breakfast there every morning,

before going to the warehouse, and would spend the larger portion of his spare time among the inmates. Nor do Mr. Dickens and his family, and Charles, who is to us the family's most important member, appear to have been relatively at all uncomfortable while under the shadow of the Marshalsea. There is in "David Copperfield" a passage of inimitable humour, where Mr. Micawber, enlarging on the pleasures of imprisonment for debt, apostrophises the King's Bench Prison as being the place "where, for the first time in many revolving years, the overwhelming pressure of pecuniary liabilities was not proclaimed from day to day, by importunate voices declining to vacate the passage; where there was no knocker on the door for any creditor to appeal to; where personal service of process was not required, and detainers were lodged merely at the gate." There is a similar passage in "Little Dorrit," where the tipsy medical practitioner of the Marshalsea comforts Mr. Dorrit in his affliction by saying: "We are quiet here; we don't get badgered here; there's no knocker here, sir, to be hammered at by creditors, and bring a man's heart into his mouth. Nobody comes here to ask if a man's at home, and to say he'll stand on the door-mat till he is. Nobody writes threatening letters about money to this place. It's freedom, sir, it's freedom!" One smiles as one reads; and it adds a pathos, I think, to the smile, to find that these are records of actual experience. The Marshalsea prison was to Mr. Dickens a haven of peace, and to his household a place of plenty. Not only could he pursue his career there untroubled by fears of arrest, but he exercised among the other "gentlemen gaol-birds" a supremacy, a kind of kingship, such as that to which Charles Lamb referred. They recognised in him the superior spirit, ready of pen, and affluent of speech, and with a certain grandeur in his conviviality. He it was who drew up their memorial to George of England on an occasion no less important than the royal birthday, when they, the monarch's "unfortunate subjects"—so they were described in the memorial—besought the King's "gracious majesty," of his "well-known munificence," to grant them a something toward the drinking of the royal health. (Ah, with what keen eyes and penetrative genius did little Charles, from his corner, watch the strange sad stream of humanity that

trickled through the room, and may be said to have *smeared* its approval of that petition!) And while Mr. Dickens was enjoying his prison honours, he was also enjoying his Admiralty pension,* which was not forfeited by his imprisonment; and his wife and children were consequently enjoying a larger measure of the necessaries of life than had been theirs for many a month. So all went on merrily enough at the Marshalsea.

But even under the old law, imprisonment for debt did not always last for ever. A legacy, and the Insolvent Debtors Act, enabled Mr. Dickens to march out of durance, in some sort with the honours of war, after a few months' incarceration—this would be early in 1824—and he went with his family, including Charles, to lodge with the "Mrs. Pipchin" already mentioned. Charles meanwhile still toiled on in the blacking warehouse, now removed to Chandos Street, Covent Garden; and had reached such skill in the tying, pasting, and labelling of the bottles, that small crowds used to collect at the window for the purpose of watching his deft fingers. There was pride in this, no doubt, but also humiliation; and release was at hand. His father and Lamert quarrelled about something—about *what,* Dickens seems never to have known—and he was sent home. Mrs. Dickens acted the part of the peacemaker on the next day, probably feeling that amid the shadowy expectations on which she and her husband had subsisted for so long, even six or seven shillings a week was something tangible, and not to be despised. Yet in spite of this, he did not return to the business. His father decided that he should go to school. "I do not write resentfully or angrily," said Dickens, in the confidential communication made long afterwards to Forster, and to which reference has already been made; "but I never afterwards forgot, I never shall forget, I never can forget, that my mother was warm for my being sent back."

The mothers of great men is a subject that has been handled often, and eloquently. How many of those who have achieved distinction can trace their inherited gifts to a mother's character, and their acquired gifts to a mother's teaching and influence. Mrs. Dickens seems not

* According to Mr. Langton's dates, he would still be drawing his pay.

to have been a mother of this stamp. She scarcely, I fear, possessed those admirable qualities of mind and heart which one can clearly recognise as having borne fruit in the greatness and goodness of her famous son. So far as I can discover, she exercised no influence upon him at all. Her name hardly appears in his biographies. He never, that I can recollect, mentions her in his correspondence; only refers to her on the rarest occasions. And perhaps, on the whole, this is not to be wondered at, if we accept the constant tradition that she had, unknown to herself, sat to her son for the portrait of Mrs. Nickleby, and suggested to him the main traits in the character of that inconsequent and not very wise old lady. Mrs. Nickleby, I take it, was not the kind of person calculated to form the mind of a boy of genius. As well might one expect some very domestic bird to teach an eaglet how to fly.

The school to which our callow eaglet was sent (in the spring or early summer of 1824), belonged emphatically to the old school of schools. It bore the goodly name of *Wellington House Academy,* and was situated in Mornington Place, near the Hampstead Road. A certain Mr. Jones held chief rule there; and as more than fifty years have now elapsed since Dickens's connection with the establishment ceased, I trust there may be nothing libellous in giving further currency to his statement, or rather, perhaps, to his recorded impression, that the head master's one qualification for his office was dexterity in the use of the cane—especially as another "old boy" corroborates that impression, and declares Mr. Jones to have been "a most ignorant fellow, and a mere tyrant." Dickens, however, escaped with comparatively little beating, because he was a day-boy, and sound policy dictated that day-boys, who had facilities for carrying home their complaints, should be treated with some leniency. So he had to get his learning without tears, which was not at all considered the orthodox method in the good old days; and, indeed, I doubt if he finally took away from Wellington House Academy very much of the book knowledge that would tell in a modern competitive examination. For though in his own account of the school it is implied that he resumed his interrupted studies with Virgil, and was, before he left, head boy, and

the possessor of many prizes, yet this is not corroborated by the evidence of his surviving fellow pupils; nor can we, of course, in the face of their direct counter evidence, treat statements made in a fictitious or half-fictitious narrative as if made in what professed to be a sober autobiography. Dickens, I repeat, seems to have acquired a very scant amount of classic lore while under the instruction of Mr. Jones, and not too much lore of any kind. But if he learned little, he observed much. He thoroughly mastered the humours of the place, just as he had mastered the humours of the Marshalsea. He had got to know all about the masters, and all about the boys, and all about the white mice—of which there were many in various stages of civilisation. He acquired, in short, a fund of school knowledge that seemed inexhaustible, and on which he drew again and again, with the most excellent results, in "David Copperfield," in "Dombey," in such inimitable short papers as "Old Cheeseman." And while thus, half unconsciously perhaps, assimilating the very life of the school, he was himself a thorough schoolboy, bright, alert, intelligent; taking part in all fun and frolic; amply indemnifying himself for his enforced abstinence from childish games during the dreary warehouse days; good at recitations and mimic plays; and already possessed of a reputation among his peers as a writer of tales.

CHAPTER II.

DICKENS cannot have been very long at Wellington House Academy, for before May, 1827, he had been at another school near Brunswick Square, and had also obtained, and quitted, some employment in the office of a solicitor in New Square, Lincoln's Inn Fields. It seems clear, therefore, that the whole of his school life might easily be computed in months; and in May, 1827, it will be remembered, he was still but a lad of fifteen. At that date he entered the office of a second solicitor, in Gray's Inn this time, on a salary of thirteen shillings and sixpence a week, afterwards increased to fifteen shillings. Here he remained till November, 1828, again picking up

a good deal of information that cannot perhaps be regarded as strictly legal, but such as he was afterwards able to turn to admirable account. He would seem to have studied the profession exhaustively in all its branches, from the topmost Tulkinghorns and Perkers, to the lowest pettifoggers like Pell and Brass, and also to have given particular attention to the parasites of the law—the Guppys and Chucksters; and altogether to have stored his mind, as he had done at school, with a series of invaluable notes and observations. All very well, no doubt, as we look at the matter now. But then it must often have seemed to the ambitious, energetic lad, that he was wasting his time. Was he to remain for ever a lawyer's clerk who has not the means to be an articled clerk, and who can never, therefore, aspire to become a full-blown solicitor? Was he to spend the future obscurely in the dingy purlieus of the law? His father, in whose career "something," as Mr. Micawber would have said, had at last "turned up," was now a reporter for the press. The son determined to be a reporter too.

He threw himself into this new career with characteristic energy. Of course a reporter is not made in a day. It takes many months of drudgery to obtain such skill in shorthand as shall enable the pen of the ready writer to keep up with the winged words of speech, and make dots and lines that shall be readable. Dickens laboured hard to acquire the art. In the intervals of his work he made it a kind of holiday task to attend the reading-room of the British Museum, and so remedy the defects in the literary part of his education. But the best powers of his mind were directed to "Gurney's system of shorthand." And in time he had his reward. He earned and justified the reputation of being one of the best reporters of his day.

I shall not quote the autobiographical passages in "David Copperfield" which bear on the difficulties of stenography. The book is in everybody's hands. But I cannot forego the pleasure of brightening my pages with Dickens's own description of his experiences as a reporter, a description contained in one of those charming felicitous speeches of his which are almost as unique in kind as his novels. Speaking in May, 1865, as chairman of a public dinner on behalf of the Newspaper Press Fund, he said:

"I have pursued the calling of a reporter under circumstances of which many of my brethren at home in England here, many of my modern successors, can form no adequate conception. I have often transcribed for the printer, from my shorthand notes, important public speeches, in which the strictest accuracy was required, and a mistake in which would have been, to a young man, severely compromising, writing on the palm of my hand, by the light of a dark lantern, in a post-chaise and four, galloping through a wild country, and through the dead of the night, at the then surprising rate of fifteen miles an hour. The very last time I was at Exeter, I strolled into the castle-yard there to identify, for the amusement of a friend, the spot on which I once took, as we used to call it, an election speech of my noble friend Lord Russell, in the midst of a lively fight maintained by all the vagabonds in that division of the county, and under such pelting rain, that I remember two good-natured colleagues, who chanced to be at leisure, held a pocket-handkerchief over my note-book, after the manner of a State canopy in an ecclesiastical procession. I have worn my knees by writing on them on the old back row of the old gallery in the old House of Commons; and I have worn my feet by standing to write in a preposterous pen in the old House of Lords, where we used to be huddled together like so many sheep, kept in waiting, say, until the woolsack might want re-stuffing. Returning home from excited political meetings in the country to the waiting press in London, I do verily believe I have been upset in almost every description of vehicle known in this country. I have been, in my time, belated in miry by-roads, toward the small hours, forty or fifty miles from London, in a wheelless carriage, with exhausted horses, and drunken postboys, and have got back in time for publication, to be received with never-forgotten compliments by the late Mr. Black, coming in the broadest of Scotch from the broadest of hearts I ever knew."

What shall I add to this? That the papers on which he was engaged as a reporter, were the "True Sun," the "Mirror of Parliament," and the "Morning Chronicle"; that long afterwards, little more than two years before his death, when addressing the journalists of New York he gave public expression to his "grateful remembrance of

a calling that was once his own," and declared "to the wholesome training of severe newspaper work, when I was a very young man, I constantly refer my first success"; that his income as a reporter appears latterly to have been some five guineas a week, of course in addition to expenses and general breakages and damages; that there is independent testimony to his exceptional quickness in reporting and transcribing, and to his intelligence in condensing; that to an observer so keen and apt, the experiences of his business journeys in those more picturesque and eventful ante-railway days must have been invaluable; and, finally, that his connection with journalism lasted far into 1836, and so did not cease till some months after "Pickwick" had begun to add to the world's store of merriment and laughter.

But I have not really reached "Pickwick" yet, nor anything like it. That master work was not also a first work. With all Dickens's genius, he had to go through some apprenticeship in the writer's art before coming upon the public as the most popular novelist of his time. Let us go back for a little to the twilight before the full sunrise, nay, to the earliest streak upon the greyness of night, to his first original published composition. Dickens himself, and in his preface to "Pickwick" too, has told us somewhat about that first paper of his; how it was "dropped stealthily one evening at twilight, with fear and trembling, into a dark letter-box, in a dark office, up a dark court in Fleet Street"; how it was accepted, and "appeared in all the glory of print"; and how he was so filled with pleasure and pride on purchasing a copy of the magazine in which it was published, that he went into Westminster Hall to hide the tears of joy that would come into his eyes. The paper thus joyfully wept over was originally entitled "A Dinner at Poplar Walk," and now bears, among the "Sketches by Boz," the name of "Mr. Minns and his Cousin"; the periodical in which it was published was the "Old Monthly Magazine," and the date of publication was January 1, 1834.

"A Dinner at Poplar Walk" may be pronounced a very fairly told tale. It is, no doubt, always easy to be wise after the event, in criticism particularly easy, and when once a writer has achieved success, there is but too little difficulty in showing that his earlier productions were

prophetic of his future greatness. At the risk, however, of incurring a charge of this kind, I repeat that Dickens's first story is well told, and that the editor of the "Old Monthly Magazine" showed due discernment in accepting it and encouraging his unknown contributor to further efforts. Quite apart from the fact that the author was only a young fellow of some two or three and twenty, both this first story and the stories that followed it in the "Old Monthly Magazine," during 1834 and the early part of 1835, possessed qualities of a very remarkable kind. So also did the humorous descriptive papers shortly afterwards published in the "Evening Chronicle," papers that, with the stories, now compose the book known as "Sketches by Boz." Sir Arthur Helps, speaking of Dickens, just after Dickens's death,* said, "His powers of observation were almost unrivalled. . . . Indeed, I have said to myself when I have been with him, he sees and observes nine facts for any two that I see and observe." This particular faculty is, I think, almost as clearly discernible in the "Sketches" as in the author's later and greater works. London—its sins and sorrows, its gaieties and amusements, its suburban gentilities, and central squalor, the aspects of its streets, and the humours of the dingier classes among its inhabitants—all this had certainly never been so seen and described before. The power of exact minute delineation lavished upon the picture is admirable. Again, the dialogue in the dramatic parts is natural, well-conducted, characteristic, and so used as to help, not impede, the narrative. The speech, for instance, of Mr. Bung, the broker's man, is a piece of very good Dickens. Of course there is humour, and very excellent fooling some of it is; and equally, of course, there is pathos, and some of that is not bad. Do I mean at all that this earlier work stands on the same level of excellence as the masterpieces of the writer? Clearly not. It were absurd to expect the stripling, half-furtively coming forward, first without a name at all, and then under the pseudonym of Boz, to write with the superb practised ease and mastery of the Charles Dickens who penned "David Copperfield." By dint of doing blacksmith's work, says the French proverb, one becomes a blacksmith. The artist, like the handicraftsman, must learn his art.

* "Macmillan's Magazine," July, 1870.

Much in the "Sketches" betrays inexperience; or, perhaps, it would be more just to say, comparative clumsiness of hand. The descriptions, graphic as they undoubtedly are, lack for the most part the final imaginative touch; the kind of inbreathing of life which afterwards gave such individual charm to Dickens's word-painting. The humour is more obvious, less delicate, turns too readily on the claim of the elderly spinster to be considered young, and the desire of all spinsters to get married. The pathos is often spoilt by over-emphasis and declamation. It lacks simplicity.

For the "Sketches" published in the "Old Monthly Magazine," Dickens got nothing, beyond the pleasure of seeing himself in print. The "Chronicle" treated him somewhat more liberally, and, on his application, increased his salary, giving him, in view of his original contributions, seven guineas a week, instead of the five guineas which he had been drawing as a reporter. Not a particularly brilliant augmentation, perhaps, and one at which he must often have smiled in after years, when his pen was dropping gold as well as ink. Still, the addition to his income was substantial, and the son of John Dickens must always, I imagine, have been in special need of money. Moreover, the circumstances of the next few months would render any increased earnings doubly pleasant. For Dickens was shortly after this engaged to be married to Miss Catherine Hogarth, the daughter of one of his fellow-workers on the "Chronicle." There had been, so Forster tells us, a previous very shadowy love affair in his career—an affair so visionary indeed, and boyish, as scarcely to be worthy of mention in this history, save for three facts: first, that his devotion, dreamlike as it was, seems to have had love's highest practical effect in inducing him to throw his whole strength into the study of shorthand; secondly, that the lady of his love appears to have had some resemblance to Dora, the child-wife of David Copperfield; and thirdly, that he met her again long years afterwards, when time had worked its changes, and the glamour of love had left his eyes, and that to that meeting we owe the passages in "Little Dorrit" relating to poor Flora. This, however, is a parenthesis. The engagement to Miss Hogarth was neither shadowy nor unreal—an engagement only in dreamland. Better

for both, perhaps—who knows?—if it had been. Ah me, if one could peer into the future, how many weddings there are at which tears would be more appropriate than smiles and laughter! Would Charles Dickens and Catherine Hogarth have foreborne to plight their troth, one wonders, if they could have foreseen how slowly and surely the coming years were to sunder their hearts and lives?—They were married on the 2nd of April, 1836.

This date again leads me to a time subsequent to the publication of the first number of "Pickwick," which had appeared a day or two before—and again I refrain from dealing with that great book. For before I do so, I wish to pause a brief space to consider what manner of man Charles Dickens was when he suddenly broke on the world in his full popularity; and also what were the influences, for good and evil, which his early career had exercised upon his character and intellect.

What manner of man was he? In outward aspect all accounts agree that he was singularly, noticeably prepossessing—bright, animated, eager, with energy and talent written in every line of his face. Such he was when Forster saw him, on the occasion of their first meeting, when Dickens was acting as spokesman for the insurgent reporters engaged on the "Mirror." So Carlyle, who met him at dinner shortly after this, and was no flatterer, sketches him for us with a pen of unwonted kindliness. "He is a fine little fellow—Boz, I think. Clear, blue, intelligent eyes, eyebrows that he arches amazingly, large protrusive rather loose mouth, a face of most extreme *mobility,* which he shuttles about—eyebrows, eyes, mouth and all—in a very singular manner while speaking. Surmount this with a loose coil of common-coloured hair, and set it on a small compact figure, very small, and dressed *à la* D'Orsay rather than well—this is Pickwick. For the rest, a quiet, shrewd-looking little fellow, who seems to guess pretty well what he is and what others are." * Is not this a graphic litle picture, and characteristic even to the touch about D'Orsay, the dandy French Count? For Dickens, like the young men of the time—Disraeli, Bulwer, and the rest—was a great fop. We, of these degenerate days, shall never see again that antique magnificence in coloured velvet waistcoats.

* Froude's "Thomas Carlyle: A History of his Life in London."

But to return. Dickens, it need scarcely be said, had by this long outlived the sickliness of his earlier years. The hardships and trials of his childhood and boyhood had served but to brace his young manhood, knitting the frame and strengthening the nerves. Light and small, as Carlyle describes him, he was wiry and very active, and could bear without injury an amount of intellectual work and bodily fatigue that would have killed many men of seemingly stronger build. And as what might have seemed unfortunate in his youth had helped perchance to develop his physical powers, so had it assisted to strengthen his character and foster his genius. I go back here to the point from which I started. No doubt a weaker man would have been crushed by such a youth. He would have been indolently content to remain a warehouse drudge, would have listlessly fallen into his father's ways about money, would have had no ambition beyond his desk and salary as a lawyer's clerk, would have never cared to piece together and supplement the scattered scraps of his education, would have rested on his oars when he had once shot into the waters of ordinary journalism. With Dickens it was not so. The alchemy of a fine nature had transmuted his disadvantages into gold. To him the lessons of such a childhood and boyhood as he had had, were energy, self-reliance, a determination to overcome all obstacles, to fight the battles of life, in all honour and rectitude, so as to win. From the muddle of his father's affairs he had taken away a lesson of method, order, and punctuality in business and other arrangements. "What is worth doing at all is worth doing well," was not only one of his favourite maxims—it was the rule of his life.

And for what was to be his life work, what better preparation could there have been than that which he received. I am far from recommending warehouses, squalid solitary lodgings, pawnshops, debtors' prisons—if such could now be found—ill-conducted private schools—which probably could be found—attorneys' offices, and the hand-to-mouth of journalism, as constituting generally the highest ideal of a liberal education. I am equally far from asserting that the majority of men do not require more training of a purely scholastic kind than fell to Dickens's lot. But Dickens was not a bookish man,

His genius did not lie in that direction. To have forced him unduly into the world of books would have made him, doubtless, an average scholar, but might have weakened his hold on life. Such a risk was certainly not worth the running. Fate arranged it otherwise. What he was above all was a student of the world of men, a passionately keen observer of the ways of humanity. Men were to be his books, his special branch of knowledge; and in order to graduate and take high honours in that school, I repeat, he could have had no better training. Not only had he passed through a range of most unwonted experiences, experiences calculated to quicken to the uttermost his superb faculties of observation and insight; but he had been placed in sympathetic communication with a strange assortment of characters, lying quite out of the usual ken of the literary classes. Knowledge and sympathy, the seeing eye and the feeling heart—were these nothing to have acquired?

That so abnormal an education can have been entirely without drawbacks, it is no part of my purpose to affirm. Tossed, as one may say, to sink or swim amid the waves of life, where those waves ran turbid and brackish, Dickens had emerged strengthened, triumphant. But that some little signs should not remain of the straining and effort with which he had won the land, was scarcely to be expected. He himself, in his more confidential communications with Forster, seems to avow a consciousness that this was so; and Forster, though he speaks guardedly lovingly, appears to be of opinion that a certain self-assertiveness and fierce intolerance of advice or control* occasionally discernible in his friend, might justly be attributed to the harsh influence of early struggles and privations. But what then? That system of education has yet to be devised which shall mould this poor human

* "I have heard Dickens described by those who knew him," says Mr. Edmund Yates, in his "Recollections," "as aggressive, imperious, and intolerant, and I can comprehend the accusation. . . . He was imperious in the sense that his life was conducted on the *sic volo sic jubeo* principle, and that everything gave way before him. The society in which he mixed; the hours which he kept, the opinions which he held, his likes and dislikes, his ideas of what should or should not be, were all settled by himself, not merely for himself, but for all those brought into connection with him, and it was never imagined they could be called in question. . . . He had immense powers of will."

clay of ours into flawless shapes of use and beauty. A man may be considered fortunate indeed, when his training has left in him only what the French call the "defects of his virtues," that is, the exaggeration of his good qualities till they turn into faults. Without his immense strength of purpose and iron will, Dickens might never have emerged from obscurity, and the world would have been very distinctly the poorer. One cannot be very sorry that he possessed these gifts in excess.

And now, at last, having slightly sketched the history of his earlier years, and endeavoured to show, however imperfectly, what influences had gone to the formation of his character, I proceed to consider the book that lifted him to fame and fortune. The years of apprenticeship are over, and the master-workman brings forth his finished work in its flower of perfection. Let us study "Pickwick."

CHAPTER III.

DICKENS has told us, in his preface to the later editions, much of how "Pickwick" came to be projected and published. It was in this wise: Seymour, a caricaturist of very considerable merit, though not, as we should now consider, in the first rank of the great caricaturists, had proposed to Messrs. Chapman and Hall, then just starting on their career as publishers, a "series of Cockney sporting plates." Messrs. Chapman and Hall entertained the idea favourably, but opined that the plates would require illustrative letter-press; and casting about for some suitable author, bethought themselves of Dickens, whose tales and sketches had been exciting some little sensation in the world of journalism; and who had, indeed, already written for the firm a story, the "Tuggs at Ramsgate," which may be read among the "Sketches." Accordingly Mr. Hall called on Dickens for the purpose of proposing the scheme. This would be in 1835, towards the latter end of the year; and Dickens, who had apparently left the paternal roof for some little time, was living bachelor-wise, in Furnival's Inn. What was his astonishment, when Mr. Hall came in, to find he was the same person

who had sold him the copy of the magazine containing his first story—that memorable copy at which he had looked, in Westminster Hall, through eyes bedimmed with joyful tears. Such coincidences always had for Dickens a peculiar, almost a superstitious, interest. The circumstance seemed of happy augury to both the "high contracting parties." Publisher and author were for the nonce on the best of terms. The latter, no doubt, saw his opening; was more than ready to undertake the work, and had no quarrel with the remuneration offered. But even then he was not the man to play second fiddle to anybody. Before they parted, he had quite succeeded in turning the tables on Seymour. The original proposal had been that the artist should produce four caricatures on sporting subjects every month, and that the letter-press should be in illustration of the caricatures. Dickens got Mr. Hall to agree to reverse that position. *He,* Dickens, was to have the command of the story, and the artist was to illustrate *him.* How far these altered relations would have worked quite smoothly if Seymour had lived, and if Dickens's story had not so soon assumed the proportions of a colossal success, it is idle to speculate. Seymour died by his own hand before the second number was published, and so ceased to be in a position to assert himself. It was, however, in deference to the peculiar bent of his art that Mr. Winkle, with his disastrous sporting proclivities, made part of the first conception of the book; and it is also very significant of the book's origin, that the design on the green wrapper in which the monthly parts made their appearance, should have had a purely sporting character, and exhibited Mr. Pickwick sleepily fishing in a punt, and Mr. Winkle shooting at what looks like a cock-sparrow—the whole surrounded by a chaste arabesque of guns, rods, and landing-nets. To Seymour, too, we owe the portrait of Mr. Pickwick, which has impressed that excellent old gentleman's face and figure upon all our memories. But to return to Dickens's interview with Mr. Hall. They seem to have parted in mutual satisfaction. At least it is certain Dickens was satisfied, for in a letter written, apparently on the same day, to "my dearest Kate," he thus sums up the proposals of the publishers: "They have made me an offer of fourteen pounds a month to write and edit a new publication they contemplate, entirely by my-

self, to be published monthly, and each number to contain four wood-cuts. . . . The work will be no joke, but the emolument is too tempting to resist."

So, little thinking how soon he would begin to regard the "emolument" as ludicrously inadequate, he set to work on "Pickwick." The first part was published on the 31st of March or 1st of April, 1836.

That part seems scarcely to have created any sensation. Mr. James Grant, the novelist, says indeed, that the first five parts were "a dead failure," and that the publishers were even debating whether the enterprise had not better be abandoned altogether, when suddenly Sam Weller appeared upon the scene, and turned their gloom into laughter. Be that as it may, certain it is that before many months had passed, Messrs. Chapman and Hall must have been thoroughly confirmed in a policy of perseverance. "The first order for Part I.," that is, the first order for binding, "was," says the bookbinder who executed the work, "for four hundred copies only." The order for Part XV. had risen to forty thousand. All contemporary accounts agree that the success was sudden, immense. The author, like Lord Byron, some twenty-five years before, "awoke and found himself famous." Young as he was, not having yet numbered more than twenty-four summers, he at one stride reached the topmost height of popularity. Everybody read his book. Everybody laughed over it. Everybody talked about it. Everybody felt, confusedly perhaps, but very surely, that a new and vital force had arisen in English literature.

And English literature just then was in one of its times of slackness, rather than full flow. The great tide of the beginning of the century had ebbed. The tide of the Victorian age had scarcely begun to do more than ripple and flash on the horizon. Byron was dead, and Shelley and Keats and Coleridge and Lamb; Southey's life was on the decline; Wordsworth had long executed his best work; while of the coming men, Carlyle, though in the plenitude of his power, having published "Sartor Resartus," had not yet published his "French Revolution," * or delivered his lectures on the "Heroes," and was not yet in the plenitude of his fame and influence; and Macaulay,

* It was finished in January, 1837, and not published till six months afterwards.

then in India, was known only as the essayist and politician; and Lord Tennyson and the Brownings were more or less names of the future. Looking especially at fiction, the time may be said to have been waiting for its master novelist. Five years had gone by since the good and great Sir Walter Scott had been laid to rest in Dryburgh Abbey, there to sleep, as is most fit, amid the ruins of that old Middle Age world he loved so well, with the babble of the Tweed for lullaby. Nor had any one shown himself of stature to step into his vacant place, albeit Bulwer, more precocious even than Dickens, was already known as the author of "Pelham," "Eugene Aram," and "The Last Days of Pompeii"; and Disraeli had written "Vivian Grey," and his earlier books; while Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë, Kingsley, George Eliot were all, of course, to come later. No, there was a vacant throne among the novelists. Here was the hour—and here, too, was the man. In virtue of natural kingship he took up his sceptre unquestioned.

Still, it may not be superfluous to inquire into the why and wherefore of his success. All effects have a cause. What was the cause of this special phenomenon? In the first place, the admirable freshness of the book won its way into every heart. There is a fervour of youth and healthy good spirits about the whole thing. In a former generation, Byron had uttered his wail of despair over a worthless world. We, in our own time, have got back to the dreary point of considering whether life be worth living. Here was a writer who had no such misgivings. For him life was pleasant, useful, full of delight—to be not only tolerated, but enjoyed. He liked its sights, its play of character, its adventures—affected no superiority to its amusements and convivialities—thoroughly laid himself out to please and to be pleased. And his characters were in the same mood. Their fund of animal spirits seemed inexhaustible. For life's jollities they were never unprepared. No doubt there were "mighty mean moments" in their existence, as there have been in the existence of most of us. It cannot have been pleasant to Mr. Winkle to have his eye blackened by the obstreperous cabman. Mr. Tracy Tupman probably felt a passing pang when jilted by the maiden aunt in favour of the audacious Jingle. No man would elect

to occupy the position of defendant in an action for breach of promise, or prefer to sojourn in a debtors' prison. But how jauntily do Mr. Pickwick and his friends shake off such discomforts! How buoyantly do they override the billows that beset their course! And what excellent digestions they have, and how slightly do they seem to suffer the next day from any little excesses in the matter of milk punch!

Then besides the good spirits and good temper, there is Dickens's royal gift of humour. As some actors have only to show their face and utter a word or two, in order to convulse an audience with merriment, so here does almost every sentence hold good and honest laughter. Not, perhaps, objects the superfine and too dainty critic, humour of the most delicate sort—not humour that for its rare and exquisite quality can be placed beside the masterpieces in that kind of Lamb, or Sterne, or Goldsmith, or Washington Irving. Granted freely; not humour of that special character. But very good humour nevertheless, the thoroughly popular humour of broad comedy and obvious farce—the humour that finds its account where absurd characters are placed in ridiculous situations, that delights in the oddities of the whimsical and eccentric, that irradiates stupidity and makes dulness amusing. How thoroughly wholesome it is too! To be at the same time merry and wise, says the old adage, is a hard combination. Dickens was both. With all his boisterous merriment, his volleys of inextinguishable laughter, he never makes game of what is at all worthy of respect. Here, as in his later books, right is right, and wrong wrong, and he is never tempted to jingle his jester's bell out of season, and make right look ridiculous. And if the humour of "Pickwick" be wholesome, it is also most genial and kindly. We have here no acrid cynic sneeringly pointing out the plague spots of humanity, and showing pleasantly how even the good are tainted with evil. Rather does Dickens delight in finding some touch of goodness, some lingering memory of better things, some hopeful aspiration, some trace of unselfish devotion in characters where all seems soddened and lost. In brief, the laughter is the laughter of one who sees the foibles, and even the vices of his fellow-men, and yet looks on them lovingly and helpfully.

So much the first readers of "Pickwick" might note as the book unfolded itself to them, part by part; and they might also note one or two things besides. They might note—they could scarcely fail to do so—that though there was a touch of caricature in nearly all the characters, yet those characters were, one and all, wonderfully real, and very much alive. It was no world of shadows to which the author introduced them. Mr. Pickwick had a very distinct existence, and so had his three friends, and Bob Sawyer, and Benjamin Allen, and Mr. Jingle, and Tony Weller, and all the swarm of minor characters. While as to Sam Weller, if it be really true that he averted impending ruin from the book, and turned defeat into victory, one can only say that it was like him. When did he ever "stint stroke" in "foughten field"? By what array of adverse circumstances was he ever taken at a disadvantage? To have created a character of this vitality, of this individual force, would be a feather in the cap of any novelist who ever lived. Something I think of Dickens's own blood passed into this special progeniture of his. It has been irreverently said that Falstaff might represent Shakespeare in his cups, just as Hamlet might represent him in his more sober moments. So I have always had a kind of fancy that Sam Weller might be regarded as Dickens himself seen in a certain aspect—a sort of Dickens, shall I say?—in an humbler sphere of life, and who had never devoted himself to literature. There is in both the same energy, pluck, essential goodness of heart, fertility of resource, abundance of animal spirits, and also an imagination of a peculiar kind, in which wit enters as a main ingredient. And having noted how highly vitalised were the characters in "Pickwick," I think the first readers might also fairly be expected to note—and, in fact, it is clear from Dickens's preface that they did note—how greatly the book increased in scope and power as it proceeded. The beginning was conceived almost in a spirit of farce. The incidents and adventures had scarcely any other object than to create amusement. Mr. Pickwick himself appeared on the scene with fantastic honours and the badge of absurdity, as "the man who had traced to their source the mighty ponds of Hampstead, and agitated the scientific world with the Theory of Tittlebats." But in all this there is a gradual change. Mr.

Pickwick is presented to us latterly as an exceedingly sound-headed as well as sound-hearted old gentleman, whom we should never think of associating with the sources of Hampstead Ponds or any other folly. While in such scenes as those at the Fleet Prison, the author is clearly endeavouring to do much more than raise a laugh. He is sounding the deeper, more tragic cords in human feeling.

Ah, if we add to all this—to the freshness, the "go," the good spirits, the keen observation, the graphic painting, the humour, the vitality of the characters, the gradual development of power—if we add to all this that something which is in all, and greater than all, viz., genius, and genius of a highly popular kind, then we shall have no difficulty in understanding why everybody read "Pickwick," and how it came to pass that its publishers made some £20,000 by a work that they had once thought of abandoning as worthless.*

CHAPTER IV.

DICKENS was not at all the man to rest on his oars while "Pickwick" was giving such a magnificent impetus to the boat that contained his fortunes. The amount of work which he accomplished in the years 1836, 1837, 1838, and 1839 is, if we consider its quality, amazing. "Pickwick," as we have seen, was begun early in the first of these years, and its publication continued till the November of 1837. Independently of his work on "Pickwick," he was, in the year 1836, engaged in the arduous profession of a reporter till the close of the parliamentary session, and also wrote a pamphlet on Sabbatarianism, a farce in two acts, "The Strange Gentleman," for the St. James's Theatre, and a comic opera, "The Village Coquettes," which was set to music by Hullah. With the very commencement of 1837—"Pickwick," it will be remembered, going on all the while—he entered upon the duties of editor of "Bentley's Miscellany," and in the second number began the publication of "Oliver Twist,"

* They acknowledged to Dickens that they had made £14,000 by the sale of the monthly parts alone.

which was continued into the early months of 1839, when his connection with the magazine ceased. In the April of 1838, and simultaneously, of course, with "Oliver Twist," appeared the first part of "Nicholas Nickleby" —the last part appearing in the October of the following year. Three novels of more than full size and of first-rate importance, in less than four years, besides a good deal of other miscellaneous work—certainly that was "good going." The pace was decidedly fast. No wonder that the "Quarterly Review," even so early as October, 1837, was tempted to croak about "Mr. Dickens" as writing "too often and too fast, and putting forth in their crude, unfinished, undigested state, thoughts, feelings, observations, and plans which it required time and study to mature," and to warn him that as he had "risen like a rocket," so he was in danger of "coming down like the stick." No wonder, I say, and yet to us now, how unjust the accusation appears, and how false the prophecy. Rapidly as those books were executed, Dickens, like the real artist that he was, had put into them his best work. There was no scamping. The critics of the time judged superficially, not making allowance for the ample fund of observations he had amassed, for the genuine fecundity of his genius, and for the admirable industry of an extremely industrious man. "The World's Workers"—there exists under that general designation a series of short biographies, for which Miss Dickens has written a sketch of her father's life. To no one could the description more fittingly apply. Throughout his life he worked desperately hard. He possessed, in a high degree, the "infinite faculty for taking pains," which is so great an adjunct to genius, though it is not, as the good Sir Joshua Reynolds held, genius itself. Thus what he had done rapidly was done well; and, for the rest, the writer, who had yet to give the world "Martin Chuzzlewit," "The Christmas Carol," "David Copperfield," and "Dombey," was not "coming down like a stick." There were many more stars, and of very brilliant colours, to be showered out by that rocket; and the stick has not even yet fallen to the ground.*

* I think critics, and perhaps I myself, have been a little hard on this Quarterly Reviewer. He did not, after all, say that Dickens would come down like a stick, only that he might do so if he wrote too fast and furiously.

Naturally, with the success of "Pickwick," came a great change in Dickens's pecuniary position. He had, as we have seen, been glad enough, before he began the book, to close with the offer of £14 for each monthly part. That sum was afterwards increased to £15, and the two first payments seem to have been made in advance for the purpose of helping him to defray the expenses of his marriage. But as the sale leapt up, the publishers themselves felt that such a rate of remuneration was altogether insufficient, and sent him, first and last, a goodly number of supplementary cheques, for sums amounting in the aggregate, as *they* computed, to £3,000, and as Forster computes to about £2,500. This Dickens, who, to use his own words, "never undervalued his own work," considered a very inadequate percentage on their gains—forgetting a little, perhaps, that the risks had been wholly theirs, and that he had been more than content with the original bargain. Similarly he was soon utterly dissatisfied with his arrangements with Bentley about the editorship of the "Miscellany" and "Oliver Twist"—arrangements which had been entered into in August, 1836, while "Pickwick" was in progress; and he utterly refused to let that publisher have "Gabriel Varden, The Locksmith of London" ("Barnaby Rudge") on the terms originally agreed upon. With Macrone also, who had made some £4,000 by the "Sketches," and given him about £400, he was no better pleased, especially when that enterprising gentleman threatened a reissue in monthly parts, and so compelled him to repurchase the copyright for £2,000. But however much he might consider himself ill-treated by the publishing fraternity, he was, of course, rapidly getting far richer than he had been, and so able to enlarge his mode of life. He had begun, modestly enough, by taking his wife to live with him in his bachelor's quarters in Furnival's Inn—much as Tommy Traddles, in "David Copperfield," took *his* wife to live in chambers at Gray's Inn; and there, in Furnival's Inn, his first child, a boy, was born on the 6th of January, 1837. But in the March of that year he moved to a more commodious dwelling, at 48, Doughty Street, where he remained till the end of 1839, when still increasing means enabled him to move to a still better house at 1, Devonshire Terrace, Regent's Park. But the house in Doughty Street must have been

endeared to him by many memories. It was there, on the 7th of May, 1837, that he lost, at the early age of seventeen, and quite suddenly, a sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, to whom he was greatly attached. The blow fell so heavily at the time as to incapacitate him from all work, and delayed the publication of one of the numbers of "Pickwick." Nor was the sorrow only sharp and transient. He speaks of her in the preface to the first edition of that book. Her spirit seemed to be hovering near as he stood looking at Niagara. He felt her hallowing influence when in danger of growing too much elated by his first reception in America. She came back to him in dreams in Italy. Her image remained in his heart, unchanged by time, as he declared, to the very end. She represented to his mind all that was pure and lovely in opening womanhood, and lives, in the world created by his art, as the Little Nell of "The Old Curiosity Shop." It was in Doughty Street, too, that he began to gather round him the circle of friends whose names seem almost like a muster-roll of the famous men and women in the first thirty years of Queen Victoria's reign. I shall not enumerate them. The list of writers, artists, actors, would be too long. But this at least it would be unjust not to note, that among his friends were included nearly all those who by any stretch of fancy could be regarded as his rivals in the fields of humour and fiction. With Washington Irving, Hood, Douglas Jerrold, Lord Lytton, Harrison Ainsworth, Wilkie Collins, Mrs. Gaskell, and, save for a passing foolish quarrel, with Thackeray, the novelist who really was his peer, he maintained the kindliest and most cordial relations. Nor when George Eliot published her first books, "The Scenes of Clerical Life" and "Adam Bede," did any one acknowledge their excellence more freely. Petty jealousies found no place in the nature of this great writer.

It was also while living at Doughty Street that he seems, in great measure, to have formed those habits of work and relaxation which every artist fashions so as to suit his own special needs and idiosyncrasies. His favourite time for work was the morning, between the hours of breakfast and lunch; and though, at this particular period, the enormous pressure of his engagements compelled him to work "double tides," and often far

into the night, yet he was essentially a day-worker, not a night-worker. Like the great German poet Goethe, he preferred to exercise his art in the fresh morning hours, when the dewdrops, as it were, lay bright upon his imagination and fancy. And for relaxation and sedative, when he had thoroughly worn himself out with mental toil, he would have recourse to the hardest bodily exercise. At first riding seems to have contented him—fifteen miles out and fifteen miles in, with a halt at some roadside inn for refreshment. But soon walking took the place of riding, and he became an indefatigable pedestrian. He would think nothing of a walk of twenty or thirty miles, and that not merely in the vigorous heyday of youth, but afterwards, to the very last. He was always on those alert, quick feet of his, perambulating London from end to end, and in every direction; perambulating the suburbs, perambulating the "greater London" that lies within a radius of twenty miles, round the central core of metropolitan houses. In short, he was everywhere, in all weathers, at all hours. Nor was London, smaller and greater, his only walking field. He would walk wherever he was—walked through and through Genoa, and all about Genoa, when he lived there; knew every inch of the Kent country round Broadstairs and round Gadshill—was, as I have said, always, always, always on his feet. But if he would pedestrianise everywhere, London remained the walking ground of his heart. As Dr. Johnson held that nothing equalled a stroll down Fleet Street, so did Dickens, sitting in full view of Genoa's perfect bay, and with the blue Mediterranean sparkling at his feet, turn in thought for inspiration to his old haunts. "Never," he writes to Forster, when about to begin "The Chimes," "never did I stagger so upon a threshold before. I seem as if I had plucked myself out of my proper soil when I left Devonshire Terrace, and could take root no more until I return to it. . . . Did I tell you how many fountains we have here? No matter. If they played nectar, they wouldn't please me half so well as the West Middlesex Waterworks at Devonshire Terrace. . . . Put me down on Waterloo Bridge at eight o'clock in the evening, with leave to roam about as long as I like, and I would come home, as you know, panting to go on. I am sadly strange as it is, and can't settle."

"Eight o'clock in the evening"—that points to another of his peculiarities. As he liked best to walk in London, so he liked best to walk at night. The darkness of the great city had a strange fascination for him. He never grew tired of it, would find pleasure and refreshment, when most weary and jaded, in losing himself in it, in abandoning himself to its mysteries. Looked at with this knowledge, the opening of the "Old Curiosity Shop" becomes a passage of autobiography. And how all these wanderings must have served him in his art! Remember what a keen observer he was, perhaps one of the keenest that ever lived, and then think what food for observation he would thus be constantly collecting. To the eye that knows how to see, there is no stage where so many scenes from the drama of life are being always enacted as the streets of London. Dickens frequented that theatre very assiduously, and of his power of sight there can be no question.

CHAPTER V.

"PICKWICK" had been a novel without any plot. The story, if story it can be called, bore every trace of its hasty origin. Scene succeeded scene, and incident incident, and Mr. Pickwick and his three friends were hurried about from place to place, and through adventures of all kinds, without any particularly defined purpose. In truth, many people, and myself among the number, find some difficulty in reading the book as a connected narrative, and prefer to take it piecemeal. But in "Oliver Twist" there is a serious effort to work out a coherent plot, and real unity of conception. Whether that conception be based on probability, is another point. Oliver is the illegitimate son of a young lady who has lapsed from virtue under circumstances of great temptation, but still lapsed from virtue, and who dies in giving him birth. He is brought up as a pauper child in a particularly ill-managed workhouse, and apprenticed to a low undertaker. Thence he escapes, and walks to London, where he falls in with a gang of thieves. His legitimate brother, an

unutterable scoundrel, happens to see him in London, and recognising him by a likeness to their common father, bribes the thieves to recapture him when he has escaped from their clutches. Now I would rather not say whether I consider it quite likely that a boy of this birth and nurture would fly at a boy much bigger than himself in vindication of the fair fame of a mother whom he had never known, or would freely risk his life to warn a sleeping household that they were being robbed, or would, on all occasions, exhibit the most excellent manners and morals, and a delicacy of feeling that is quite dainty. But this is the essence of the book. To show purity and goodness of disposition as self-sufficient in themselves to resist all adverse influences, is Dickens's main object. Take Oliver's sweet uncontaminated character away, and the story crumbles to pieces. With mere improbabilities of plot, I have no quarrel. Of course it is not likely that the boy, on the occasion of his first escape from the thieves, should be rescued by his father's oldest friend, and, on the second occasion, came across his aunt. But such coincidences must be accepted in any story; they violate no truth of character. I am afraid I can't say as much of Master Oliver's graces and virtues.

With this reservation, however, how much there is in the book to which unstinted admiration can be given! As "Pickwick" first fully exhibited the humorous side of Dickens's genius, so "Oliver Twist" first fully exhibited its tragic side—the pathetic side was to come somewhat later. The scenes at the workhouse; at the thieves' dens in London; the burglary; the murder of poor Nancy; the escape and death of the horror-haunted Sikes—all are painted with a master's hand. And the book, like its predecessor, and like those that were to follow, contains characters that have passed into common knowledge as types—characters of the keenest individuality, and that yet seem in themselves to sum up a whole class. Such are Bill Sikes, whose ruffianism has an almost epic grandeur; and black-hearted Fagin, the Jew, receiver of stolen goods and trainer of youth in the way they should *not* go; and Master Dawkins, the Artful Dodger. Such, too, is Mr. Bumble, greatest and most unhappy of beadles.

Comedy had predominated in "Pickwick," tragedy in "Oliver Twist." The more complete fusion of the two

was effected in "Nicholas Nickleby." But as the mighty actor Garrick, in the well-known picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds, is drawn towards the more mirthful of the two sisters, so, here again, I think that comedy decidedly bears away the palm—though tragedy is not beaten altogether without a struggle either. Here is the story as it unfolds itself. The two heroes are Ralph Nickleby and his nephew Nicholas. They stand forth, almost from the beginning, as antagonists, in battle array the one against the other; and the story is, in the main, a history of the campaigns between them—cunning and greed being mustered on the one side, and young, generous courage on the other. At first Nicholas believes in his uncle, who promises to befriend Nicholas's mother and sister, and obtains for Nicholas himself a situation as usher in a Yorkshire school kept by one Squeers. But the young fellow's gorge rises at the sickening cruelty exercised in the school, and he leaves it, having first beaten Mr. Squeers—leaves it followed by a poor shattered creature called Smike. Meanwhile Ralph, the usurer, befriends his sister-in-law and niece after his own fashion, and tries to use the latter's beauty in furtherance of his trade as a money-lender. Nicholas discovers his plots, frustrates all his schemes, rescues, and ultimately marries, a young lady who had been immeshed in one of them; and Ralph, at last, utterly beaten, commits suicide on finding that Smike, through whom he had been endeavouring all through to injure Nicholas, and who is now dead, was his own son. Such are the book's dry bones, its skeleton, which one is almost ashamed to expose thus nakedly. For the beauty of these novels lies not at all in the plot; it is in the incidents, situations, characters. And with beauty of this kind how richly dowered is "Nicholas Nickleby"! Take the characters alone. What lavish profusion of humour in the theatrical group that clusters round Mr. Vincent Crumules, the country manager; and in the Squeers family too; and in the little shop-world of Mrs. Mantalini, the fashionable dressmaker; and in Cheerible Brothers, the golden-hearted old merchants who take Nicholas into their counting-house. Then for single characters commend me to Mrs. Nickleby, whose logic, which some cynics would call feminine, is positively sublime in its want of coherence; and to John Browdie, the

honest Yorkshire cornfactor, as good a fellow almost as Dandie Dinmont, the Border yeoman whom Scott made immortal. The high-life personages are far less successful. Dickens had small gift that way, and seldom succeeded in his society pictures. Nor, if the truth must be told, do I greatly care for the description of the duel between Sir Mulberry Hawk and Lord Verisopht, though it was evidently very much admired at the time and is quoted, as a favourable specimen of Dickens's style, in Charles Knight's "Half-hours with the Best Authors." The writing is a little too *tall*. It lacks simplicity, as is sometimes the case with Dickens, when he wants to be particularly impressive.

And this leads me, by a kind of natural sequence, to what I have to say about his next book, "The Old Curiosity Shop"; for here, again, though in a very much more marked degree, I fear I shall have to run counter to a popular opinion.

But first a word as to the circumstances under which the book was published. Casting about, after the conclusion of "Nicholas Nickleby," for further literary ventures, Dickens came to the conclusion that the public must be getting tired of his stories in monthly parts. It occurred to him that a weekly periodical, somewhat after the manner of Addison's "Spectator" or Goldsmith's "Bee," and containing essays, stories, and miscellaneous papers—to be written mainly, but not entirely, by himself—would be just the thing to revive interest, and give his popularity a spur. Accordingly an arrangement was entered into with Messrs. Chapman and Hall, by which they covenanted to give him £50 for each weekly number of such a periodical, and half profits—and the first number of "Master Humphrey's Clock" made its appearance in the April of 1840. Unfortunately Dickens had reckoned altogether without his host. The public were not to be cajoled. What they expected from their favourite was novels, not essays, short stories, or sketches, however admirable. The orders for the first number had amounted to seventy thousand; but they fell off as soon as it was discovered that Master Humphrey, sitting by his clock, had no intention of beguiling the world with a continuous narrative—that the title, in short, did not stand for the title of a novel. Either the times were not ripe

for the "Household Words," which, ten years afterwards, proved to be such a great and permanent success, or Dickens had laid his plans badly. Vainly did he put forth all his powers, vainly did he bring back upon the stage those old popular favourites, Mr. Pickwick, Sam Weller, and Tony Weller. All was of no avail. Clearly, in order to avoid defeat, a change of front had become necessary. The novel of "The Old Curiosity Shop" was accordingly commenced in the fourth number of the "Clock," and very soon acted the cuckoo's part of thrusting Master Humphrey and all that belonged to him out of the nest. He disappeared pretty well from the periodical, and when the novel was republished, the whole machinery of the "Clock" had gone—and with it, I may add, some very characteristic and admirable writing. Dickens himself confessed that he "winced a little," when the "opening paper, . . . in which Master Humphrey described himself and his manner of life," "became the property of the trunkmaker and the butterman"; and most Dickens lovers will agree with me in rejoicing that the omitted parts have been tardily rescued from unmerited neglect.

There is no hero in "The Old Curiosity Shop"—unless Mr. Richard Swiveller, "perpetual grand-master of the Glorious Apollos," be the questionable hero; and the heroine is Little Nell, a child. Of Dickens's singular feeling for the pathos and humour of childhood, I have already spoken. Many novelists, perhaps one might even say, most novelists, have no freedom of utterance when they come to speak about children, do not know what to do with a child if it chances to stray into their pages. But how different with Dickens! He is never more thoroughly at home than with the little folk. Perhaps his best speech, and they all are good, is the one uttered at the dinner given on behalf of the Children's Hospital. Certainly there is no figure in "Dombey and Son" on which more loving care has been lavished than the figure of little Paul, and when the lad dies one quite feels that the light has gone out of the book. "David Copperfield" shorn of David's childhood and youth would be a far less admirable performance. The hero of "Oliver Twist" is a boy. Pip is a boy through a fair portion of "Great Expectations." The heroine of "The Old Curiosity Shop" is a girl. And of all these children, the one who

seems, from the first, to have stood highest in popular favour, and won most hearts, is Little Nell. Ay me, what tears have been shed over her weary wanderings with that absurd old gambling grandfather of hers; how many persons have sorrowed over her untimely end as if she had been a daughter or a sister. High and low, literate and illiterate, over nearly all has she cast her spell. Hood, he who sang the "Song of the Shirt," paid her the tribute of his admiration, and Jeffrey, the hard-headed old judge and editor of the "Edinburgh Review," the tribute of his tears. Landor volleyed forth his thunderous praises over her grave, likening her to Juliet and Desdemona. Nay, Dickens himself sadly bewailed her fate, described himself as being the "wretchedest of the wretched" when it drew near, and shut himself from all society as if he had suffered a real bereavement. While as to the feeling which she has excited in the breast of the illiterate, we may take Mr. Bret Harte's account of the haggard gold-diggers by the roaring Californian camp-fire, who throw down their cards to listen to her story, and, for the nonce, are softened and humanised.*—Such is the sympathy she has created. And for the description of her death and burial, as a superb piece of pathetic writing, there has been a perfect chorus of praise, broken here and there no doubt by a discordant voice, but still of the loudest and most heartfelt. Did not Horne, a poet better known to the last generation than to this, point out that though printed as prose, these passages were, perhaps as "the result of harmonious accident," essentially poetry, and "written in blank verse of irregular metres and rhythms, which Southey and Shelley and some other poets have occasionally adopted"? Did he not print part of the passages in this form, substituting only, as a concession to the conventionalities of verse, the word "grandames" for "grandmothers"; and did he not declare of one of the extracts so printed that it was "worthy of the best passages in Wordsworth"?

If it "argues an insensibility" to stand somewhat unmoved among all these tears and admiration, I am afraid I must be rather pebble-hearted. To tell the whole damaging truth, I am, and always have been, only slightly affected by the story of Little Nell; have never felt any

* See p. 121.

particular inclination to shed a tear over it, and consider the closing chapters as failing of their due effect, on me at least, because they are pitched in a key that is altogether too high and unnatural. Of course one makes a confession of this kind with diffidence. It is no light thing to stem the current of a popular opinion. But one can only go with the stream when one thinks the stream is flowing in a right channel. And here I think the stream is meandering out of its course. For me, Little Nell is scarcely more than a figure in cloudland. Possibly part of the reason why I do not feel as much sympathy with her as I ought, is because I do not seem to know her very well. With Paul Dombey I am intimately acquainted. I should recognise the child anywhere, should be on the best of terms with him in five minutes. Few things would give me greater pleasure than an hour's saunter by the side of his little invalid's carriage along the Parade at Brighton. How we should laugh, to be sure, if we happened to come across Mr. Toots, and smile, too, if we met Feeder, B.A., and give a furtive glance of recognition at Glubb, the discarded charioteer. Then the classic Cornelia Blimber would pass, on her constitutional, and we should quail a little—at least I am certain *I* should—as she bent upon us her scholastic spectacles; and a glimpse of Dr. Blimber would chill us even more; till—ah! what's this? Why does a flush of happiness mantle over my little friend's pale face? Why does he utter a faint cry of pleasure? Yes, there she is—he has caught sight of Floy running forward to meet him.—So am I led, almost instinctively, whenever the figure of Paul flashes into my mind, to think of him as a child I have actually known. But Nell—she has no such reality of existence. She has been etherealised, vapourised, rhapsodised about, till the flesh and blood have gone out of her. I recognise her attributes, unselfishness, sweetness of disposition, gentleness. But these do not constitute a human being. They do not make up a recognisable individuality. If I met her in the street, I am afraid I should not know her; and if I did, I am sure we should both find it difficult to keep up a conversation.

Do the passages describing her death and burial really possess the rhythm of poetry? That would seem to me, I confess, to be as ill a compliment as to say of a piece

of poetry that it was really prose. The music of prose and of poetry are essentially different. They do not affect the ear in the same way. The one is akin to song, the other to speech. Give to prose the recurring cadences, the measure, and the rhythmic march of verse, and it becomes bad prose without becoming good poetry.* So, in fairness to Dickens, one is bound, as far as one can, to forget Horne's misapplied praise. But even thus, and looking upon it as prose alone, can we say that the account of Nell's funeral is, in the high artistic sense, a piece of good work? Here is an extract: "And now the bell—the bell she had so often heard, by night and day, and listened to with solemn pleasure almost as a living voice—rang its remorseless toll, for her, so young, so beautiful, so good. Decrepit age, and vigorous life, and blooming youth, and helpless infancy, poured forth—on crutches, in the pride of strength and health, in the full blush of promise, in the mere dawn of life—to gather round her tomb. Old men were there, whose eyes were dim and senses failing—grandmothers, who might have died ten years ago, and still been old—the deaf, the blind, the lame, the palsied, the living dead in many shapes and forms, to see the closing of that earthly grave. What was the death it would shut in, to that which still could crawl and creep above it?" Such is the tone throughout, and one feels inclined to ask whether it is quite the appropriate tone in which to speak of the funeral of a child in a country churchyard? All this pomp of rhetoric seems to me—shall I say it?—as much out of place as if Nell had been buried like some great soldier or minister of state—with a hearse, all sable velvet and nodding plumes, drawn by a long train of sable steeds, and with a final discharge of artillery over the grave. The verbal honours paid here to the deceased are really not much less incongruous and out of keeping. Surely in such a subject, above all others, the pathos of simplicity would have been most effective.

There are some, indeed, who deny to Dickens the gift of pathos altogether. Such persons acknowledge, for the most part a little unwillingly, that he was a master of humour of the broader, more obvious kind. But they

* Dickens himself knew that he had a tendency to fall into blank verse in moments of excitement, and tried to guard against it.

assert that all his sentiment is mawkish and overstrained, and that his efforts to compel our tears are so obvious as to defeat their own purpose. Now it will be clear, from what I have said about Little Nell, that I am capable of appreciating the force of any criticism of this kind; nay, that I go so far as to acknowledge that Dickens occasionally lays himself open to it. But go one inch beyond this I cannot. Of course we may, if we like, take up a position of pure stoicism, and deny pathos altogether, in life as in art. We may regard all human affairs but as a mere struggle for existence, and say that might makes right, and that the weak is only treated according to his deserts when he goes to the wall. We may hold that neither sorrow nor suffering call for any meed of sympathy. Such is mainly the attitude which the French novelist adopts towards the world of his creation.* But once admit that feeling is legitimate; once allow that tears are due to those who have been crushed and left bleeding by this great world of ours as it goes crashing, blundering on its way; once grant that the writer's art can properly embrace what Shakespeare calls "the pity of it," the sorrows inwoven in all our human relationship; once acknowledge all this, and then I affirm, most confidently, that Dickens, working at his best, was one of the greatest masters of pathos who ever lived. I can myself see scarce a strained discordant note in the account of the short life and early death of Paul Dombey, and none in the description of the death of Paul Dombey's mother, or in the story of Tiny Tim, or in the record of David Copperfield's childhood and boyhood. I consider the passage in "American Notes" describing the traits of gentle kindliness among the emigrants as being nobly, pathetically eloquent. Did space allow, I could support my position by quotations and example to any extent. And my conclusion is that, though he failed with Little Nell, yet he succeeded elsewhere, and superbly.

The number of "Master Humphrey's Clock," containing the conclusion of "The Old Curiosity Shop," appeared on the 17th of January, 1841, and "Barnaby Rudge" began its course in the ensuing week. The first had been essentially a tale of modern life. All the characters that made a kind of background, mostly grotesque or

* M. Daudet, in many respects a follower of Dickens, is a fine and notable exception.

hideous, for the figure of Little Nell, were characters of to-day, or at least of the day when the book was written. Quilp, the dwarf—and a far finer specimen of a scoundrel by the by, in every respect, than that poor stage villain Monks; Sampson Brass and his legal sister Sally, a goodly pair; Kit, golden-hearted and plain of body, who so barely escapes from the plot laid by the afore-mentioned worthies to prove him a thief; Chuckster, most lady-killing of notaries' clerks; Mrs. Jarley, the good-natured waxwork woman, in whose soul there would be naught save kindliness, only she cannot bring herself to tolerate Punch and Judy; Short and Codlin, the Punch and Judy men; the little misused servant, whom Dick Swiveller in his grandeur creates a marchioness; and the magnificent Swiveller himself, prince among the idle and impecunious, justifying by his snatches of song, and flowery rhetoric, his high position as "perpetual grand-master" among the "Glorious Apollers"—all these, making allowance perhaps for some idealisation, were personages of Dickens's own time. But in "Barnaby Rudge," Dickens threw himself back into the last century. The book is a historical novel, one of the two which he wrote (the other being "A Tale of Two Cities"), and its scenes are many of them laid among the No-Popery Riots of 1780.

A ghastly time, a time of aimless, brutal incendiarism and mad turbulence on the part of the mob; a time of weakness and ineptitude on the part of the Government; a time of wickedness, folly, and misrule! Dickens describes it admirably. His picture of the riots themselves seems painted in pigments of blood and fire; and yet, through all the hurry and confusion, he retains the clearness of arrangement and lucidity which characterise the pictures of such subjects when executed by the great masters of the art—as Carlyle, for example. His portrait of the poor, crazy-brained creature, Lord George Gordon, who sowed the wind which the country was to reap in whirlwind, is excellent. Nor is what may be called the private part of the story unskilfully woven with the historical part. The plot, though not good, rises perhaps above the average of Dickens's plots; for even we, his admirers, are scarcely bound to maintain that plot was his strong point. Beyond this, I think I may say that the book is, on the whole, the least characteristic of his books. It is the one

which those who are most out of sympathy with his peculiar vein of humour and pathos will probably think the best, and the one which the true Dickens lovers will generally regard as bearing the greatest resemblance to an ordinary novel.

CHAPTER VI.

THE last number of "Barnaby Rudge" appeared in November, 1841, and, on the 4th of the following January Dickens sailed with his wife for a six months' tour in the United States. What induced him to undertake this journey, more formidable then, of course, than now?

Mainly, I think, that restless desire to see the world which is strong in a great many men, and was specially strong in Dickens. Ride as he might, and walk as he might, his abounding energies remained unsatisfied. In 1837 there had been trips to Belgium, Broadstairs, Brighton; in 1838 to Yorkshire, Broadstairs, North Wales, and a fairly long stay at Twickenham; in 1839 a similar stay at Petersham—where, as at Twickenham, frolic gaiety and athletics had prevailed—and trips to Broadstairs and Devonshire; in 1840 trips again to Bath, Birmingham, Shakespeare's country, Broadstairs, Devonshire; in 1841 more trips, and a very notable visit to Edinburgh, with which Little Nell had a great deal to do. For Lord Jeffrey was enamoured of that young lady, declaring to whomsoever would hear that there had been "nothing so good . . . since Cordelia"; and inoculating the citizens of the northern capital with his enthusiasm, he had induced them to offer to Dickens a right royal banquet, and the freedom of their city. Accordingly to Edinburgh he repaired, and the dinner took place on the 26th of June, with three hundred of the chief notabilities for entertainers, and a reception such as kings might have envied. Jeffrey himself was ill and unable to take the chair, but Wilson, the leonine "Christopher North," editor of "Blackwood," and author of those "Noctes Ambrosianæ" which were read so eagerly as they came out, and which some of us find so difficult to read now—Wilson presided most worthily. Of speechifying there was of course much, and

compliments abounded. But the banquet itself, the whole reception at Edinburgh were the most magnificent of compliments. Never, I imagine, can such efforts have been made to turn any young man's brain, as were made, during this and the following year, to turn the head of Dickens, who was still, be it remembered, under thirty. Nevertheless he came unscathed through the ordeal. A kind of manly genuineness bore him through. Amid all the adulation and excitement, the public and private hospitalities, the semi-regal state appearance at the theatre, he could write, and write truly, to his friend Forster: "The moral of this is, that there is no place like home; and that I thank God most heartily for having given me a quiet spirit and a heart that won't hold many people. I sigh for Devonshire Terrace and Broadstairs, for battledore and shuttlecock; I want to dine in a blouse with you and Mac (Maclise). . . . On Sunday evening, the 17th July, I shall revisit my household gods, please Heaven. I wish the day were here."

Yes, except during the few years when he and his wife lived unhappily together, he was greatly attached to his home, with its friendships and simple pleasures; but yet, as I have said, a desire to see more of the world, and to garner new experiences, was strong upon him. The two conflicting influences often warred in his life, so that it almost seemed sometimes as if he were being driven by relentless furies. Those furies pointed now with stern fingers towards America, though "how" he was "to get on" "for seven or eight months without" his friends, he could not upon his "soul conceive"; though he dreaded "to think of breaking up all" his "old happy habits for so long a time"; though "Kate," remembering doubtless her four little children, wept whenever the subject was "spoken of." Something made him feel that the going was "a matter of imperative necessity." Washington Irving beckoned from across the Atlantic, speaking, as Jeffrey had spoken from Edinburgh, of Little Nell and her far-extended influence. There was a great reception foreshadowed, and a new world to be seen, and a book to be written about it. While as to the strongest of the home ties—the children that brought the tears into Mrs. Dickens's eyes—the separation, after all, would not be eternal, and the good Macready, tragic actor and true

friend, would take charge of the little folk while their parents were away. So Dickens, who had some time before "begun counting the days between this and coming home again," set sail for America on the 4th of January, 1842.

And a very rough experience he, and Mrs. Dickens, and Mrs. Dickens's maid seem to have had during that January passage from Liverpool to Halifax and Boston. Most of the time it blew horribly, and they were direfully ill. Then a storm supervened, which swept away the paddle-boxes and stove in the life-boats, and they seem to have been in real peril. Next the ship struck on a mud-bank. But dangers and discomforts must have been forgotten, at any rate to begin with, in the glories of the reception that awaited the "inimitable"—as Dickens whimsically called himself in those days—when he landed in the New World. If he had been received with princely honours in Edinburgh, he was treated now as an emperor in some triumphant progress. Halifax sounded the first note of welcome, gave, as it were, the preliminary trumpet flourish. From that town he writes: "I wish you could have seen the crowds cheering the inimitable in the streets. I wish you could have seen judges, law-officers, bishops, and law-makers welcoming the inimitable. I wish you could have seen the inimitable shown to a great elbow-chair by the Speaker's throne, and sitting alone in the middle of the floor of the House of Commons, the observed of all observers, listening with exemplary gravity to the queerest speaking possible, and breaking, in spite of himself, into a smile as he thought of this commencement to the thousand and one stories in reserve for home." At Boston the enthusiasm had swelled to even greater proportions. "How can I give you," he writes, "the faintest notion of my reception here; of the crowds that pour in and out the whole day; of the people that line the streets when I go out; of the cheering when I went to the theatre; of the copies of verses, letters of congratulation, welcomes of all kinds, balls, dinners, assemblies without end? . . . There is to be a dinner in New York, . . . to which I have had an invitation with every known name in America appended to it. . . . I have had deputations from the Far West, who have come from more than two thousand miles' distance; from the lakes, the rivers, the

backwoods, the log-houses, the cities, factories, villages, and towns. Authorities from nearly all the states have written to me. I have heard from the universities, Congress, Senate, and bodies, public and private, of every sort and kind." All was indeed going happy as a marriage bell. Did I not rightly say that the world was conspiring to spoil this young man of thirty, whose youth had certainly not been passed in the splendour of opulence or power? What wonder if in the dawn of his American experiences, and of such a reception, everything assumed a roseate hue? Is it matter for surprise if he found the women "very beautiful," the "general breeding neither stiff nor forward," "the good nature universal"; if he expatiated, not without a backward look at unprogressive Old England, on the comparative comfort among the working classes, and the absence of beggars in the streets? But, alas, that rosy dawn ended, as rosy dawns sometimes will, in sleet and mist and very dirty weather. Before many weeks, before many days had flown, Dickens was writing in a very different spirit. On the 24th of February, in the midst of a perfect ovation of balls and dinners, he writes "with reluctance, disappointment, and sorrow," that "there is no country on the face of the earth, where there is less freedom of opinion on any subject in reference to which there is a broad difference of opinion, than in the United States." On the 22nd of March he writes again, to Macready, who seems to have remonstrated with him on his growing discontent: "It is of no use, I *am* disappointed. This is not the republic I came to see; this is not the republic of my imagination. I infinitely prefer a liberal monarchy—even with its sickening accompaniment of court circulars—to such a government as this. The more I think of its youth and strength, the poorer and more trifling in a thousand aspects it appears in my eyes. In everything of which it has made a boast—excepting its education of the people, and its care for poor children—it sinks immeasurably below the level I had placed it upon, and England, even England, bad and faulty as the old land is, and miserable as millions of her people are, rises in the comparison. . . . Freedom of opinion! Where is it? I see a press more mean, and paltry, and silly, and disgraceful than any country I ever knew. . . . In the respects of not being left alone, and of being hor-

ribly disgusted by tobacco-chewing and tobacco-spittle, I have suffered considerably."

Extracts like these could be multiplied to any extent, and the question arises, Why did such a change come over the spirit of Dickens? Washington Irving, at the great New York dinner, had called him "the guest of the nation." Why was the guest so quickly dissatisfied with his host, and quarrelling with the character of his entertainment? Sheer physical fatigue, I think, had a good deal to do with it. Even at Boston, before he had begun to travel over the unending railways, watercourses, and chaotic coach-roads of the great republic, that keynote had been sounded. "We are already," he had written, "weary at times, past all expression." Few men can wander with impunity out of their own professional sphere, and undertake duties for which they have neither the training nor acquired tastes. Dickens was a writer, not a king; and here he was expected to hold a king's state, and live in a king's publicity, but without the formal etiquette that hedges a king from intruders, and makes his position tolerable. He was hemmed in by curious eyes, mobbed in the streets, stared at in his own private rooms, interviewed by the hour, shaken by the hand till his arm must often have been ready to drop off, waylaid at every turn with formal addresses. If he went to church the people crowded into the adjacent pews, and the preacher preached at him. If he got into a public conveyance, every one inside insisted on an introduction, and the people outside—say before the train started—would pull down the windows and comment freely on his nose and eyes and personal appearance generally, some even touching him as if to see if he were real. He was safe from intrusion nowhere—no, not when he was washing and his wife in bed. Such attentions must have been exhausting to a degree that can scarcely be imagined. But there was more than mere physical weariness in his growing distaste for the United States. Perfectly outspoken at all times, and eager for the strife of tongues in any cause which he had at heart, it horrified him to find that he was expected not to express himself freely on such subjects as International Copyright, and that even in private, or semi-private intercourse, slavery was a topic to be avoided. Then I fear, too, that as he left cultured Boston behind,

he was brought into close and habitual contact with natives whom he did not appreciate. Rightly or wrongly, he took a strong dislike for Brother Jonathan as Brother Jonathan existed, in the rough. He was angered by that young gentleman's brag, offended by the rough familiarity of his manners, indignant at his determination by all means to acquire dollars, incensed by his utter want of care for literature and art, sickened by his tobacco-chewing and expectorations. So when Dickens gets to "Niagara Falls, upon the *English* side," he puts ten dashes under the word English; and, meeting two English officers, contrasts them in thought with the men whom he has just left, and seems, by note of exclamation and italics, to call upon the world to witness, "what *gentlemen*, what noblemen of nature they seemed!"

And Brother Jonathan, how did *he* regard his young guest? Well, Jonathan, great as he was, and greater as he was destined to be, did not possess the gift of prophecy, and could not of course foresee the scathing satire of "American Notes" and "Martin Chuzzlewit." But still, amid all his enthusiasm, I think there must have been a feeling of uneasiness and disappointment. Part, as there is no doubt, of the fervour with which he greeted Dickens, was due to his regarding Dickens as the representative of democratic feeling in aristocratic England, as the advocate of the poor and downtrodden against the wealthy and the strong; "and"—thus argued Jonathan—"because we are a democracy, therefore Dickens will admire and love us, and see how immeasurably superior we are to the retrogade Britishers of his native land." But unfortunately Dickens showed no signs of being impressed in that particular way. On the contrary, as we have seen, such comparison as he made in his own mind was infinitely to the disadvantage of the United States. "We must be cracked up," says Hannibal Chollop, in "Martin Chuzzlewit," speaking of his fellow-countrymen. And Dickens, even while fêted and honoured, would not "crack up" the Americans. He lectured them almost with truculence on their sins in the matter of copyright; he could scarcely be restrained from testifying against slavery; he was not the man to say he liked manners and customs which he loathed. Jonathan must have been very doubtfully satisfied with his guest.

It is no part of my purpose to follow Dickens lingeringly, and step by step, from the day when he landed at Halifax, to the 7th of June, when he re-embarked at New York for England. From Boston he went to New York, where the great dinner was given with Washington Irving in the chair, and thence to Philadelphia and Washington —which was still the empty "city of magnificent distances"—and thence again westward, and by Niagara and Canada back to New York. And if any persons want to know what he thought about these and other places, and the railway travelling, and the coach travelling, and the steamboat travelling, and the prisons and other public institutions—aye, and many other things besides—they cannot do better than read the "American Notes," which he wrote and published within the year after his return. Nor need such persons be deterred by the fact that Macaulay thought meanly of the book; for Macaulay, with all his great gifts, did not, as he himself knew full well, excel in purely literary criticism. So when he pronounces, that "what is meant to be easy and sprightly is vulgar and flippant," and "what is meant to be fine is a great deal too fine for me, as the description of the Falls of Niagara," one can venture to differ without too great a pang. The book, though not assuredly one of Dickens's best, contains admirable passages which none but he could have written, and the description of Niagara is noticeably fine, the sublimity of the subject being remembered, as a piece of impassioned prose. Whether satire so bitter and unfriendly as that in which he indulged, both here and in "Martin Chuzzlewit," was justifiable from what may be called an international point of view, is another question. Publicists do not always remember that a cut which would smart for a moment, and then be forgotten, if aimed at a countryman, rankles and festers if administered to a foreigner. And if this be true as regards the English publicist's comment on the foreigner who does not understand our language, it is, of course, true with tenfold force as regards the foreigner whose language is our own. *He* understands only too well the jibe and the sneer, and the tone of superiority, more offensive perhaps than either. Looked at in this way, it can, I think, but be accounted a misfortune that the most popular of English writers penned two books

containing so much calculated to wound American feeling, as the "Notes" and "Martin Chuzzlewit." Nor are signs entirely wanting that, as the years went by, the mind of Dickens himself was haunted by some such suspicion. A quarter of a century later, he visited the United States a second time; and speaking at a public dinner given in his honour by the journalists of New York, he took occasion to comment on the enormous strides which the country had made in the interval, and then said, "Nor am I, believe me, so arrogant as to suppose that in five and twenty years there have been no changes in me, and that I had nothing to learn, and no extreme impressions to correct when I was here first." And he added that, in all future editions of the two books just named, he would cause to be recorded, that, "wherever he had been, in the smallest place equally with the largest, he had been received with unsurpassable politeness, delicacy, sweet temper, hospitality, consideration, and with unsurpassable respect for the privacy daily enforced upon him by the nature of his avocation there" (as a public reader), "and the state of his health."

And now, with three observations, I will conclude what I have to say about the visit to America in 1842. The first is that the "Notes" are entirely void of all vulgarity of reference to the private life of the notable Americans whom Dickens had met. He seems to have known, more or less intimately, the chief writers of the time—Washington Irving, Channing, Dana, Bryant, Longfellow, Bancroft; but his intercourse with them he held sacred, and he made no literary capital out of it. Secondly, it is pleasant to note that there was, so far, no great "incompatibility of temper" between him and his wife. He speaks of her enthusiastically, in his correspondence, as a "most admirable traveller," and expatiates on the good temper and equanimity with which she had borne the fatigues and jars of a most trying journey. And the third point to which I will call attention is the thoroughly characteristic form of rest to which he had recourse in the midst of all his toil and travel. Most men would have sought relaxation in being quiet. He found it in vigorously getting up private theatricals with the officers of the Coldstream Guards, at Montreal. Besides acting in all the three pieces played, he also accepted the part

of stage manager; and "I am not," he says, "placarded as stage manager for nothing. Everybody was told that they would have to submit to the most iron despotism, and didn't I come Macready over them? Oh no, by no means; certainly not. The pains I have taken with them, and the perspiration I have expended, during the last ten days, exceed in amount anything you can imagine." What bright vitality, and what a singular charm of exuberant animal spirits!

And who was glad one evening—which would be about the last evening in June, or the first of July—when a hackney coach rattled up to the door of the house in Devonshire Terrace, and four little folk, two girls and two boys, were hurried down, and kissed through the bars of the gate, because their father was too eager to wait till it was opened? Who were glad but the little folk aforementioned—I say nothing of the joy of father and mother—for children as they were, a sense of sorrowful loss had been theirs while their parents were away, and greater strictness seems to have reigned in the good Macready's household than in their own joyous home. It is Miss Dickens herself who tells us this, and in whose memory has lingered that pretty scene of the kiss through the bars in the summer gloaming. And she has much to tell us, too, of her father's tenderness and care—of his sympathy with the children's terrors, so that, for instance, he would sit beside the cot of one of the little girls who had been startled, and hold her hand in his till she fell asleep; of his having them on his knees, and singing to them the merriest of comic songs; of his interest in all their small concerns; of the many pet names with which he invested them. Then, as they grew older, there were Twelfth Night parties and magic lanterns. "Never such magic lanterns as those shown by him," she says. "Never such conjuring as his." There was dancing, too, and the little ones taught him his steps, which he practised with much assiduity, once even jumping out of bed in terror, lest he had forgotten the polka, and indulging in a solitary midnight rehearsal. Then, as the children grew older still, there were private theatricals. "He never," she says again, "was too busy to interest himself in his children's occupations, lessons, amusements, and general welfare." Clearly not one of those brilliant men, a numerous race,

who when away from their homes, in general society, sparkle and scintillate, flash out their wit, and irradiate all with their humour, but who, when at home, are dull as rusted steel. Among the many tributes to his greatness, that of his own child has a place at once touching and beautiful.

CHAPTER VII.

WITH the return from America began the old life of hard work and hard play. There was much industrious writing of "American Notes," at Broadstairs and elsewhere; and there were many dinners of welcome home, and strolls, doubtless, with Forster and Maclise, and other intimates, to old haunts, as Jack Straw's Castle on Hampstead Heath, and similar houses of public entertainment. And then in the autumn there was "such a trip . . . into Cornwall," with Forster, and the painters Stanfield and Maclise for travelling companions. How they enjoyed themselves, and with what bubbling, bursting merriment! "I never laughed in my life as I did on this journey," writes Dickens, ". . . I was choking and gasping . . . all the way. And Stanfield got into such apoplectic entanglements that we were often obliged to beat him on the back with portmanteaus before we could recover him." Immediately on their return, refreshed and invigorated by this wholesome hilarity and enjoyment, he threw himself into the composition of his next book, and the first number of "Martin Chuzzlewit" appeared in January, 1843.

"Martin Chuzzlewit" is unquestionably one of Dickens's great works. He himself held it to be "in a hundred points" and "immeasurably" superior to anything he had before written, and that verdict may, I think, on the whole, be accepted. The plot, as plot is usually understood, can scarcely indeed be commended. But then plot was never his strong point. Later in life, and acting, as I have always surmised, under the influence of his friend, Mr. Wilkie Collins, he endeavoured to construct ingenious stories that turned on mysterious disappearances, and the substitution of one person for another, and murders real

or suspected. All this was, to my mind, a mistak Dickens had no real gift for the manufacture of the ingenious pieces of mechanism. He did not even mai times succeed in disposing the events and marshalling tl characters in his narratives so as to work, by seeming unforced and natural means, to a final situation ai climax. Too often, in order to hold his story together ar make it move forward at all, he was compelled to mal his personages pursue a line of conduct preposterous an improbable, and even antagonistic to their nature. Tal this very book. Old Martin Chuzzlewit is a man who ha been accustomed, all through a long life, to have his ow way, and to take it with a high hand. Yet he so far set aside, during a course of months, every habit of his life as to simulate the weakest subservience to Pecksniff—an that not for the purpose of unmasking Pecksniff, wh wanted no unmasking, but only in order to disappoin him. Is it believable that old Martin should have thought Pecksniff worth so much trouble, personal inconvenience and humiliation? Or take again Mr. Boffin in "Our Mutual Friend." Mr. Boffin is a simple, guileless, open-hearted, open-handed old man. Yet, in order to prove to Miss Bella Wilfer that it is not well to be mercenary, he, again, goes through a long course of dissimulation, and does some admirable comic business in the character of a miser. I say it boldly, I do not believe Mr. Boffin possessed that amount of histrionic talent. Plots requiring to be worked out by such means are ill-constructed plots; or, to put it in another way, a man who had any gift for the construction of plots would never have had recourse to such means. Nor would he, I think, have adopted, as Dickens did habitually and for all his stories, a mode of publication so destructive of unity of effect as the publication in monthly or weekly parts. How could the reader see as a whole that which was presented to him at intervals of time more or less distant? How, and this is of infinitely greater importance, how could the writer produce it as a whole? For Dickens, it must be remembered, never finished a book before the commencement of publication. At first he scarcely did more than complete each monthly instalment as required; and though afterwards he was generally some little way in advance, yet always he wrote by parts, having the interest of each

separate part in his mind, as well as the general interest of the whole novel. Thus, however desirable in the development of the story, he dared not risk a comparatively tame and uneventful number. Moreover, any portion once issued was unalterable and irrevocable. If, as sometimes happened, any modification seemed desirable as the book progressed, there was no possibility of changing anything in the chapters already in the hands of the public, and so making them harmonise better with the new.

But of course, with all this, the question still remains how far Dickens's comparative failure as a constructor of plots really detracts from his fame and standing as a novelist. To my mind, I confess, not very much. Plot I regard as the least essential element in the novelist's art. A novel can take the very highest rank without it. There is not any plot to speak of in Lesage's "Gil Blas," and just as little in Thackeray's "Vanity Fair," and only a very bad one in Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield." Coleridge admired the plot of "Tom Jones," but though one naturally hesitates to differ from a critic of such superb mastery and power, I confess I have never been struck by that plot, any more than by the plots, such as they are, in "Joseph Andrews," or in Smollett's works. Nor, if I can judge of other people's memories by my own, is it by the mechanism of the story, or by the intrigue, however admirably woven and unravelled, that one remembers a work of fiction. These may exercise an intense passing interest of curiosity, especially during a first perusal. But afterwards they fade from the mind, while the characters, if highly vitalised and strong, will stand out in our thoughts, fresh and full coloured, for an indefinite time. Scott's "Guy Mannering" is a well-constructed story. The plot is deftly laid, the events are prepared for with a cunning hand; the coincidences are so arranged as to be made to look as probable as may be. Yet we remember and love the book, not for such excellences as these, but for Dandie Dinmont, the Border farmer, and Pleydell, the Edinburgh advocate, and Meg Merrilies, the gipsy. The book's life is in its flesh and blood, not in its plot. And the same is true of Dickens's novels. He crowds them so full of human creatures, each with its own individuality and character, that we have no care for more than just as

much story as may serve to show them struggling, joying, sorrowing, loving. If the incidents will do this for us we are satisfied. It is not necessary that those incidents should be made to go through cunning evolutions to a definite end. Each is admirable in itself, and admirably adapted to its immediate purpose. That should more than suffice.

And Dickens sometimes succeeds in reaching a higher unity than that of mere plot. He takes one central idea, and makes of it the soul of his novel, animating and vivifying every part. That central idea in "Martin Chuzzlewit" is the influence of selfishness. The Chuzzlewits are a selfish race. Old Martin is selfish; and so, with many good qualities and possibilities of better things, is his grandson, young Martin. The other branch of the family, Anthony Chuzzlewit and his son Jonas, are much worse. The latter especially is a horrible creature. Brought up to think of nothing except his own interests and the main chance, he is only saved by an accident from the crime of parricide, and afterwards commits a murder and poisons himself. As his career is one of terrible descent, so young Martin's is one of gradual regeneration from his besetting weakness. He falls in love with his cousin Mary—the only unselfish member of the family, by-the-by—and quarrels about this love-affair with his grandfather, and so passes into the hard school of adversity. There he learns much. Specially valuable is the teaching which he gets as a settler in the swampy backwoods of the United States in company with Mark Tapley, jolliest and most helpful of men. On his return, he finds his grandfather seemingly under the influence of Pecksniff, the hypocrite, the English Tartuffe. But that, as I have already mentioned, is only a ruse. Old Martin is deceiving Pecksniff, who in due time receives the reward of his deeds, and all ends happily for those who deserve happiness. Such is something like a bare outline of the story, with the beauty eliminated. For what makes its interest, we must go further, to the household of Pecksniff with his two daughters, Charity and Mercy, and Tom Pinch, whose beautiful, unselfish character stands so in contrast to that of the grasping self-seekers by whom he is surrounded; we must study young Martin himself, whose character is admirably drawn, and without Dickens's usual tendency

to caricature; we must laugh in sympathy with Mark Tapley; we must follow them both through the American scenes, which, intensely amusing as they are, must have bitterly envenomed the wounds inflicted on the national vanity by "American Notes," and, according to Dickens's own expression, "sent them all stark staring raving mad across the water"; we must frequent the boarding establishment for single gentlemen kept by lean Mrs. Todgers, and sit with Sarah Gamp and Betsy Prig as they hideously discuss their avocations, or quarrel over the shadowy Mrs. Harris; we must follow Jonas Chuzzlewit on his errand of murder, and note how even his felon nature is appalled by the blackness and horror of his guilt, and how the ghastly terror of it haunts and cows him. A great book, I say again, a very great book.

Yet not at the time a successful book. Why Fortune, the fickle jade, should have taken it into her freakish head to frown, or half frown, on Dickens at this particular juncture, who shall tell? He was wooing her with his very best work, and she turned from him. The sale of "Pickwick" and "Nicholas Nickleby" had been from forty to fifty thousand copies of each part; the sale of "Master Humphrey's Clock" had risen still higher; the sale of even the most popular parts of "Martin Chuzzlewit" fell to twenty-three thousand. This was, as may be supposed, a grievous disappointment. Dickens's personal expenditure had not perhaps been lavish in view of what he thought he could calculate on earning; but it had been freely based on that calculation. Demands, too, were being made upon his purse by relations—probably by his father, and certainly by his brother Frederick, which were frequent, embarrassing, and made in a way which one may call worse than indelicate. Any permanent loss of popularity would have meant serious money entanglements. With his father's career in full view, such a prospect must have been anything but pleasant. He cast about what he should do, and determined to leave England for a space, live more economically on the Continent, and gather materials in Italy or Switzerland for a new travel book. But before carrying out this project, he would woo fortune once again, and in a different form. During the months of October and November, 1843, in the intervals of "Chuzzlewit," he wrote a short story that has taken its

place, by almost universal consent, among his masterpieces, nay, among the masterpieces of English literature: "A Christmas Carol."

All Dickens's great gifts seem reflected, sharp and distinct, in this little book, as in a convex mirror. His humour, his best pathos, which is not that of grandiloquence, but of simplicity, his bright poetic fancy, his kindliness, all here find a place. It is great painting in miniature, genius in its quintessence, a gem of perfect water. We may apply to it any simile that implies excellence in the smallest compass. None but a fine imagination would have conceived the supernatural agency that works old Scrooge's moral regeneration—the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and to come, that each in turn speaks to the wizened heart of the old miser, so that, almost unwittingly, he is softened by the tender memories of childhood, warmed by sympathy for those who struggle and suffer, and appalled by the prospect of his own ultimate desolation and black solitude. Then the episodes: the scenes to which these ghostly visitants convey Scrooge; the story of his earlier years as shown in vision; the household of the Cratchits, and poor little crippled Tiny Tim; the party given by Scrooge's nephew; nay, before all these, the terrible interview with Marley's Ghost. All are admirably executed. Sacrilege would it be to suggest the alteration of a word. First of the Christmas books in the order of time, it is also the best of its own kind; it is in its own order perfect.

Nor did the public of Christmas, 1843, fail to appreciate that something of very excellent quality had been brought forth for their benefit. "The first edition of six thousand copies," says Forster, "was sold" on the day of publication, and about as many more would seem to have been disposed of before the end of February, 1844. But, alas, Dickens had set his heart on a profit of £1,000, whereas in February he did not see his way to much more than £460,* and his unpaid bills for the previous year he described as "terrific." So something, as I have said, had to be done. A change of front became imperative. Messrs. Bradbury and Evans advanced him £2,800 "for a fourth share in whatever he might write during the ensuing eight years"—he purchased at the Pantechnicon

* The profit at the end of 1844 was £726.

"a good old shabby devil of a coach," also described as "an English travelling carriage of considerable proportions"; engaged a courier who turned out to be the courier of couriers, a very conjurer among couriers; let his house in Devonshire Terrace; and so started off for Italy, as I calculate the dates, on the 1st of July, 1844.

CHAPTER VIII.

AH, those eventful, picturesque, uncomfortable old travelling days, when railways were unborn, or in their infancy; those interminable old dusty drives, in diligence or private carriage, along miles and miles of roads running straight to the low horizon, through a line of tall poplars, across the plains of France! What an old-world memory it seems, and yet, as the years go, not so very long since after all. The party that rumbled from Boulogne to Marseilles in the old "devil of a coach" aforesaid, "and another conveyance for luggage," and I know not what other conveyances besides, consisted of Dickens himself; Mrs. Dickens; her sister, Miss Georgina Hogarth, who had come to live with them on their return from America; five children, for another boy had been born some six months before; Roche, the prince of couriers; "Anne," apparently the same maid who had accompanied them across the Atlantic; and other dependents: a somewhat formidable troupe and cavalcade. Of their mode of travel, and what they saw on the way, or perhaps, more accurately, of what Dickens saw, with those specially keen eyes of his, at Lyons, Avignon, Marseilles, and other places—one may read the master's own account in the "Pictures from Italy." Marseilles was reached on the 14th of July, and thence a steamer took them, coasting the fairy Mediterranean shores, to Genoa, their ultimate destination, where they landed on the 16th.

The Italy of 1844 was like, and yet unlike the Italy of to-day. It was the old disunited Italy of several small kingdoms and principalities, the Italy over which lowered the shadow of despotic Austria, and of the Pope's temporal power, not the Italy which the genius of Cavour welded

into a nation. It was a land whose interest came altogether from the past, and that lay as it were in the beauty of time's sunset. How unlike the United States! The contrast has always, I confess, seemed to me a piquant one. It has often struck me with a feeling of quaintness that the two countries which Dickens specially visited and described, were, the one this lovely land of age and hoar antiquity, and the other that young giant land of the West, which is still in the garish strong light of morning, and whose great day is in the future. Nor, I think, before he had seen both, would Dickens himself have been able to tell on which side his sympathies would lie. Thoroughly popular in his convictions, thoroughly satisfied that to-day was in all respects better than yesterday, it is clear that he expected to find more pleasure in the brand-new republic than his actual experience warranted. The roughness of the strong, uncultured young life grated upon him. It jarred upon his sensibilities. But of Italy he wrote with very different feeling. What though the places were dirty, the people shiftless, idle, unpunctual, unbusinesslike, and the fleas as the sand which is upon the seashore for multitude? It mattered not while life was so picturesque and varied, and manners were so full of amenity. Your inn might be, and probably was, ill-appointed, untidy, the floors of brick, the door agape, the windows banging—a contrast in every way to the palatial hotel in New York or Washington. But then how cheerful and amusing were mine host and hostess, and how smilingly determined all concerned to make things pleasant. So the artist in Dickens turned from the new to the old, and Italy, as she is wont, cast upon him her spell.

First impressions, however, were not altogether satisfactory. Dickens owns to a pang when he was "set down" at Albaro, a suburb of Genoa, "in a rank, dull, weedy courtyard, attached to a kind of pink gaol, and told he lived there." But he immediately adds: "I little thought that day that I should ever come to have an attachment for the very stones in the streets of Genoa, and to look back upon the city with affection, as connected with many hours of happiness and quiet." In sooth, he enjoyed the place thoroughly. "Martin Chuzzlewit" had left his hands. He was fairly entitled for a few weeks to the luxury of idleness, and he threw himself into doing

nothing, as he was accustomed to throw himself into his work, with all energy. And there was much to do, much especially to see. So Dickens bathed and walked; and strolled about the city hither and thither, and about the suburbs and about the surrounding country; and visited public buildings and private palaces; and noted the ways of the inhabitants; and saw Genoese life in its varied forms; and wrote light glancing letters about it all to friends at home; and learnt Italian; and, in the end of September, left his "pink gaol," which had been taken for him at a disproportionate rent, and moved into the Palazzo Peschiere, in Genoa itself: a wonderful palace, with an entrance-hall fifty feet high, and larger than "the dining-room of the Academy," and bedrooms "in size and shape like those at Windsor Castle, but greatly higher," and a view from the windows over gardens where the many fountains sparkled, and the gold fish glinted, and into Genoa itself, with its "many churches, monasteries, and convents pointing to the sunny sky," and into the harbour, and over the sapphire sea, and up again to the encircling hills—a view, as Dickens declared, that "no custom could impair, and no description enhance."

But with the beginning of October came again the time for work; and beautiful beyond all beauty as were his surroundings, the child of London turned to the home of his heart, and pined for the London streets. For some little space he seemed to be thinking in vain, and cudgelling his brains for naught, when suddenly the chimes of Genoa's many churches, that seemed to have been clashing and clanging nothing but distraction and madness, rang harmony into his mind. The subject and title of his new Christmas book were found. He threw himself into the composition of "The Chimes."

Earnest at all times in what he wrote, living ever in intense and passionate sympathy with the world of his imagination, he seems specially to have put his whole heart into this book. "All my affections and passions got twined and knotted up in it, and I became as haggard as a murderer long before I wrote 'the end'"—so he told Lady Blessington on the 20th of November; and to Forster he expressed the yearning that was in him to "leave" his "hand upon the time, lastingly upon the time, with one tender touch for the mass of toiling people

of stage manager; and "I am not," he says, "placarded as stage manager for nothing. Everybody was told that they would have to submit to the most iron despotism, and didn't I come Macready over them? Oh no, by no means; certainly not. The pains I have taken with them, and the perspiration I have expended, during the last ten days, exceed in amount anything you can imagine." What bright vitality, and what a singular charm of exuberant animal spirits!

And who was glad one evening—which would be about the last evening in June, or the first of July—when a hackney coach rattled up to the door of the house in Devonshire Terrace, and four little folk, two girls and two boys, were hurried down, and kissed through the bars of the gate, because their father was too eager to wait till it was opened? Who were glad but the little folk aforementioned—I say nothing of the joy of father and mother—for children as they were, a sense of sorrowful loss had been theirs while their parents were away, and greater strictness seems to have reigned in the good Macready's household than in their own joyous home. It is Miss Dickens herself who tells us this, and in whose memory has lingered that pretty scene of the kiss through the bars in the summer gloaming. And she has much to tell us, too, of her father's tenderness and care—of his sympathy with the children's terrors, so that, for instance, he would sit beside the cot of one of the little girls who had been startled, and hold her hand in his till she fell asleep; of his having them on his knees, and singing to them the merriest of comic songs; of his interest in all their small concerns; of the many pet names with which he invested them. Then, as they grew older, there were Twelfth Night parties and magic lanterns. "Never such magic lanterns as those shown by him," she says. "Never such conjuring as his." There was dancing, too, and the little ones taught him his steps, which he practised with much assiduity, once even jumping out of bed in terror, lest he had forgotten the polka, and indulging in a solitary midnight rehearsal. Then, as the children grew older still, there were private theatricals. "He never," she says again, "was too busy to interest himself in his children's occupations, lessons, amusements, and general welfare." Clearly not one of those brilliant men, a numerous race,

who when away from their homes, in general society, sparkle and scintillate, flash out their wit, and irradiate all with their humour, but who, when at home, are dull as rusted steel. Among the many tributes to his greatness, that of his own child has a place at once touching and beautiful.

CHAPTER VII.

WITH the return from America began the old life of hard work and hard play. There was much industrious writing of "American Notes," at Broadstairs and elsewhere; and there were many dinners of welcome home, and strolls, doubtless, with Forster and Maclise, and other intimates, to old haunts, as Jack Straw's Castle on Hampstead Heath, and similar houses of public entertainment. And then in the autumn there was "such a trip . . . into Cornwall," with Forster, and the painters Stanfield and Maclise for travelling companions. How they enjoyed themselves, and with what bubbling, bursting merriment! "I never laughed in my life as I did on this journey," writes Dickens, ". . . I was choking and gasping . . . all the way. And Stanfield got into such apoplectic entanglements that we were often obliged to beat him on the back with portmanteaus before we could recover him." Immediately on their return, refreshed and invigorated by this wholesome hilarity and enjoyment, he threw himself into the composition of his next book, and the first number of "Martin Chuzzlewit" appeared in January, 1843.

"Martin Chuzzlewit" is unquestionably one of Dickens's great works. He himself held it to be "in a hundred points" and "immeasurably" superior to anything he had before written, and that verdict may, I think, on the whole, be accepted. The plot, as plot is usually understood, can scarcely indeed be commended. But then plot was never his strong point. Later in life, and acting, as I have always surmised, under the influence of his friend, Mr. Wilkie Collins, he endeavoured to construct ingenious stories that turned on mysterious disappearances, and the substitution of one person for another, and murders real

or suspected. All this was, to my mind, a mistake. Dickens had no real gift for the manufacture of these ingenious pieces of mechanism. He did not even many times succeed in disposing the events and marshalling the characters in his narratives so as to work, by seemingly unforced and natural means, to a final situation and climax. Too often, in order to hold his story together and make it move forward at all, he was compelled to make his personages pursue a line of conduct preposterous and improbable, and even antagonistic to their nature. Take this very book. Old Martin Chuzzlewit is a man who has been accustomed, all through a long life, to have his own way, and to take it with a high hand. Yet he so far sets aside, during a course of months, every habit of his life, as to simulate the weakest subservience to Pecksniff—and that not for the purpose of unmasking Pecksniff, who wanted no unmasking, but only in order to disappoint him. Is it believable that old Martin should have thought Pecksniff worth so much trouble, personal inconvenience, and humiliation? Or take again Mr. Boffin in "Our Mutual Friend." Mr. Boffin is a simple, guileless, open-hearted, open-handed old man. Yet, in order to prove to Miss Bella Wilfer that it is not well to be mercenary, he, again, goes through a long course of dissimulation, and does some admirable comic business in the character of a miser. I say it boldly, I do not believe Mr. Boffin possessed that amount of histrionic talent. Plots requiring to be worked out by such means are ill-constructed plots; or, to put it in another way, a man who had any gift for the construction of plots would never have had recourse to such means. Nor would he, I think, have adopted, as Dickens did habitually and for all his stories, a mode of publication so destructive of unity of effect as the publication in monthly or weekly parts. How could the reader see as a whole that which was presented to him at intervals of time more or less distant? How, and this is of infinitely greater importance, how could the writer produce it as a whole? For Dickens, it must be remembered, never finished a book before the commencement of publication. At first he scarcely did more than complete each monthly instalment as required; and though afterwards he was generally some little way in advance, yet always he wrote by parts, having the interest of each

separate part in his mind, as well as the general interest of the whole novel. Thus, however desirable in the development of the story, he dared not risk a comparatively tame and uneventful number. Moreover, any portion once issued was unalterable and irrevocable. If, as sometimes happened, any modification seemed desirable as the book progressed, there was no possibility of changing anything in the chapters already in the hands of the public, and so making them harmonise better with the new.

But of course, with all this, the question still remains how far Dickens's comparative failure as a constructor of plots really detracts from his fame and standing as a novelist. To my mind, I confess, not very much. Plot I regard as the least essential element in the novelist's art. A novel can take the very highest rank without it. There is not any plot to speak of in Lesage's "Gil Blas," and just as little in Thackeray's "Vanity Fair," and only a very bad one in Goldsmith's "Vicar of Wakefield." Coleridge admired the plot of "Tom Jones," but though one naturally hesitates to differ from a critic of such superb mastery and power, I confess I have never been struck by that plot, any more than by the plots, such as they are, in "Joseph Andrews," or in Smollett's works. Nor, if I can judge of other people's memories by my own, is it by the mechanism of the story, or by the intrigue, however admirably woven and unravelled, that one remembers a work of fiction. These may exercise an intense passing interest of curiosity, especially during a first perusal. But afterwards they fade from the mind, while the characters, if highly vitalised and strong, will stand out in our thoughts, fresh and full coloured, for an indefinite time. Scott's "Guy Mannering" is a well-constructed story. The plot is deftly laid, the events are prepared for with a cunning hand; the coincidences are so arranged as to be made to look as probable as may be. Yet we remember and love the book, not for such excellences as these, but for Dandie Dinmont, the Border farmer, and Pleydell, the Edinburgh advocate, and Meg Merrilies, the gipsy. The book's life is in its flesh and blood, not in its plot. And the same is true of Dickens's novels. He crowds them so full of human creatures, each with its own individuality and character, that we have no care for more than just as

tioned as happening in 1845, is the publication of another very pretty Christmas story, "The Cricket on the Hearth."

Though Dickens had ceased to edit the "Daily News" on the 9th of February, 1846, he contributed to the paper for some few weeks longer. But by the month of May his connection with it had entirely ceased; and on the 31st of that month, he started, by Belgium and the Rhine, for Lausanne in Switzerland, where he had determined to spend some time, and commence his next great book, and write his next Christmas story.

A beautiful place is Lausanne, as many of my readers will know; and a beautiful house the house called Rosemont, situated on a hill that rises from the Lake of Geneva, with the lake's blue waters stretching below, and across, on the other side, a magnificent panorama of snowy mountains, the Simplon, St. Gothard, Mont Blanc, towering to the sky. This delightful place Dickens took at a rent of some £10 a month. Then he rearranged all the furniture, as was his energetic wont. Then he spent a fortnight or so in looking about him, and writing a good deal for Lord John Russell on Ragged Schools, and for Miss Coutts about her various charities; and finally, on the 28th of June, as he announced to Forster in capital letters, BEGAN DOMBEY.

But as the Swiss pine with homesickness when away from their own dear land, so did this Londoner, amid all the glories of the Alps, pine for the London streets. It seemed almost as if they were essential to the exercise of his genius. The same strange mental phenomenon which he had observed in himself at Genoa was reproduced here. Everything else in his surroundings smiled most congenially. The place was fair beyond speech. The shifting, changing beauty of the mountains entranced him. The walks offered an endless variety of enjoyment. He liked the people. He liked the English colony. He had made several dear friends among them and among the natives. He was interested in the politics of the country, which happened, just then, to be in a state of peculiar excitement and revolution. Everything was charming—"but," he writes, "the toil and labour of writing, day after day, without that magic-lantern (of the London streets) is IMMENSE!" It literally knocked him up. He had "bad nights," was "sick and giddy," desponding

over his book, more than half inclined to abandon the Christmas story altogether for that year. However, a short trip to Geneva, and the dissipation of a stroll or so in its thoroughfares, to remind him, as it were, of what streets were like, and a week of "idleness" "rusting and devouring," "complete and unbroken," set him comparatively on his legs again, and before he left Lausanne for Paris on the 16th of November. he had finished three parts of "Dombey," and "The Battle of Life."

Of the latter I don't know that I need say anything. It is decidedly the weakest of his Christmas books. But "Dombey" is very different work, and the first five numbers especially, which carry the story to the death of little Paul, contain passages of humour and pathos, and of humour and pathos mingled together and shot in warp and woof, like some daintiest silken fabric, that are scarcely to be matched in the language. As I go in my mind through the motherless child's short history—his birth, his christening, the engagement of the wet-nurse, the time when he is consigned to the loveless care of Mrs. Pipchin, his education in Dr. Blimber's Academy under the classic Cornelia, and his death—as I follow it all in thought, now smiling at each well-remembered touch of humour, and now saddened and solemnised as the shadow of death deepens over the frail little life, I confess to something more than critical admiration for the writer as an artist. I feel towards him as towards one who has touched my heart. Of course it is the misfortune of the book, regarding it as a whole, that the chapters relating to Paul, which are only an episode, should be of such absorbing interest, and come so early. Dickens really wrote them too well. They dwarf the rest of the story. We find a difficulty in resuming the thread of it with the same zest when the child is gone. But though the remainder of the book inevitably suffers in this way, it ought not to suffer unduly. Even apart from little Paul the novel is a fine one. Pride is its subject, as selfishness is that of "Martin Chuzzlewit." Mr. Dombey, the city merchant, has as much of the arrogance of caste and position as any blue-blooded hidalgo. He is as proud of his name as if he had inherited it from a race of princes. That he neglects and slights his daughter, and loves his son, is mainly because the latter will add a sort of completeness to the firm, and

make it truly Dombey *and Son*, while the girl, for all commercial purposes, can be nothing but a cipher. And through his pride he is struck to the heart, and ruined. Mr. Carker, his confidential agent and manager, trades upon it for all vile ends, first to feather his own nest, and then to launch his patron into large and unsound business ventures. The second wife, whom he marries, certainly with no affection on either side, but purely because of her birth and connections, and because her great beauty will add to his social prestige—she, with ungovernable pride equal to his own, revolts against his authority, and, in order to humiliate him the more, pretends to elope with Carker, whom in turn she scorns and crushes. Broken thus in fortune and honour, Mr. Dombey yet falls not ignobly. His creditors he satisfies in full, reserving to himself nothing; and with a softened heart turns to the daughter he had slighted, and in her love finds comfort. Such is the main purport of the story, and round it, in graceful arabesques, are embroidered, after Dickens's manner, a whole world of subsidiary incidents thronged with all sorts of characters. What might not one say about Dr. Blimber's genteel academy at Brighton; and the Toodles family, so humble in station and intellect and so large of heart; and the contrast between Carker the manager and his brother, who for some early dishonest act, long since repented of, remains always Carker the junior; and about Captain Cuttle, and that poor, muddled nautical philosopher, Captain Bunsby, and the Game Chicken, and Mrs. Pipchin, and Miss Tox; and Cousin Feenix with wilful legs so little under control, and yet to the core of him a gentleman; and the apoplectic Major Bagstock, the Joey B. who claimed to be "rough and tough and devilish sly"; and Susan Nipper, as swift of tongue as a rapier, and as sharp? Reader, don't you know all these people? For myself, I have jostled against them constantly. They are as much part of my life as the people I meet every day.

But there is one person whom I have left out of my enumeration, not certainly because I don't know him, for I know him very well, but because I want to speak about him more particularly. That person is my old friend, Mr. Toots; and the special point in his character which induces me to linger is the slight touch of craziness

that sits so charmingly upon him. M. Taine, the French critic, in his chapters on Dickens, repeats the old remark that genius and madness are near akin. He observes, and observes truly, that Dickens describes so well because an imagination of singular intensity enables him to *see* the object presented, and at the same time to impart to it a kind of visionary life. "That imagination," says M. Taine, "is akin to the imagination of the monomaniac." And, starting from this point, he proceeds to show, here again quite truly, with what admirable sympathetic power and insight Dickens has described certain cases of madness, as in Mr. Dick. But here, having said some right things, M. Taine goes all wrong. According to him, these portraits of persons who have lost their wits, "however amusing they may seem at first sight," are "horrible." They could only have been painted by "an imagination such as that of Dickens, excessive, disordered, and capable of hallucination." He seems to be not far from thinking that only our splenetic and melancholy race could have given birth to such literary monsters. To speak like this, as I conceive, shows a singular misconception of the instinct or set purpose that led Dickens to introduce these characters into his novels at all. It is perfectly true that he has done so several times. Barnaby Rudge, the hero of the book of the same name, is half-witted. Mr. Dick, in "David Copperfield," is decidedly crazy. Mr. Toots is at least simple. Little Miss Flite, in "Bleak House," haunting the Law Courts in expectation of a judgment on the Day of Judgment, is certainly not *compos mentis*. And one may concede to M. Taine that some element of sadness must always be present when we see a human creature imperfectly gifted with man's noblest attribute of reason. But, granting this to the full, is it possible to conceive of anything more kindly and gentle in the delineation of partial insanity than the portraits which the French critic finds horrible? Barnaby Rudge's lunatic symptoms are compatible with the keenest enjoyment of nature's sights and sounds, fresh air and free sunlight, and compatible with loyalty and high courage. Many men might profitably change their reason for his unreason. Mr. Dick's flightiness is allied to an intense devotion and gratitude to the woman who had rescued him from confinement in an asylum; there lives

a world of kindly sentiments in his poor bewildered brains. Of Mr. Toots, Susan Nipper says truly, "he may not be a Solomon, nor do I say he is, but this I do say, a less selfish human creature human nature never knew." And to this one may add that he is entirely high-minded, generous, and honourable. Miss Flite's crazes do not prevent her from being full of all womanly sympathies. Here I think lies the charm these characters had for Dickens. As he was fond of showing a soul of goodness in the ill-favoured and uncouth, so he liked to make men feel that even in a disordered intellect all kindly virtues might find a home, and a happy one. M. Taine may call this "horrible" if he likes. I think myself it would be possible to find a better adjective.

Dickens was at work on "Dombey and Son" during the latter part of the year 1846, and the whole of 1847, and the early part of 1848. We left him on the 16th of November, in the first of these years, starting from Lausanne for Paris, which he reached on the evening of the 20th. Here he took a house—a "preposterous" house, according to his own account, with only gleams of reason in it; and visited many theatres; and went very often to the Morgue, where lie the unowned dead; and had pleasant friendly intercourse with the notable French authors of the time, Alexandre Dumas the Great, most prolific of romance writers; and Scribe of the innumerable plays; and the poets Lamartine and Victor Hugo; and Châteaubriand, then in his sad and somewhat morose old age. And in Paris too, with the help of streets and crowded ways, he wrote the great number of "Dombey," the number in which little Paul dies. Three months did Dickens spend in the French capital, the incomparable city, and then was back in London, at the old life of hard work; but with even a stronger infusion than before of private theatricals—private theatricals on a grandiose scale, that were applauded by the Queen herself, and took him and his troupe starring about during the next three or four years, hither and thither, and here and there, in London and the provinces. "Splendid strolling" Forster calls it; and a period of unmixed jollity and enjoyment it seems to have been. Of course Dickens was the life and soul of it all. Mrs. Cowden Clarke, looking back to that happy time, says enthusiastically, "Charles Dickens,

beaming in look, alert in manner, radiant with good humour, genial-voiced, gay, the very soul of enjoyment, fun, good taste, and good spirits, admirable in organising details and suggesting novelty of entertainment, was of all beings the very man for a holiday season." The proceeds of the performances were devoted to various objects, but chiefly to an impossible "Guild of Literature and Art," which, in the sanguine confidence of its projectors, and especially of Dickens, was to inaugurate a golden age for the author and the artist. But of all this, and of Dickens's speeches at the Leeds Mechanics' Institute, and Glasgow Athenæum, in the December of 1847, I don't know that I need say very much. The interest of a great writer's life is, after all, mainly in what he writes; and when I have said that "Dombey" proved to be a pecuniary success, the first six numbers realising as much as £2,820, I think I may fairly pass on to Dickens's next book, "The Haunted Man."

This was his Christmas story for 1848; the last, and not the worst of his Christmas stories. Both conception and treatment are thoroughly characteristic. Mr. Redlaw, a chemist, brooding over an ancient wrong, comes to the conclusion that it would be better for himself, better for all, if, in each of us, every memory of the past could be cancelled. A ghostly visitant, born of his own resentment and gloom, gives him the boon he seeks, and enables him to go about the world freezing all recollection in those he meets. And lo, the boon turns out to be a curse. His presence blights those on whom it falls. For with the memory of past wrongs, goes the memory of past benefits, of all the mutual kindlinesses of life, and each unit of humanity becomes self-centred and selfish. Two beings alone resist his influence—one, a creature too selfishly nurtured for any of mankind's better recollections; and the other a woman so good as to resist the spell, and even, finally, to exorcise it in Mr. Redlaw's own breast.

"David Copperfield" was published between May, 1849, and the autumn of 1850, and marks, I think, the culminating point in Dickens's career as a writer. So far there had been, not perhaps from book to book, but on the whole, decided progress, the gradual attainment of greater ease, and of the power of obtaining results as strong, and better, by simpler means. Beyond this there

was, if not absolute declension, for he never wrote anything that could properly be called careless and unworthy of himself, yet at least no advance. Of the interest that attaches to the book from the fact that so many portions are autobiographical, I have already spoken; nor need I go over the ground again. But quite apart from such adventitious attractions, the novel is an admirable one. All the scenes of little David's childhood in the Norfolk home—the Blunderstone rookery, where there were no rooks—are among the most beautiful pictures of childhood in existence. In what sunshine of love does the lad bask with his mother and Peggotty, till Mrs. Copperfield contracts her disastrous second marriage with Mr. Murdstone! Then how the scene changes. There come harshness and cruelty; banishment to Mr. Creakle's villainous school; the poor mother's death; the worse banishment to London, and descent into warehouse drudgery; the strange shabby genteel, happy-go-lucky life with the Micawbers; the flight from intolerable ills in the forlorn hope that David's aunt will take pity on him. Here the scene changes again. Miss Betsy Trotwood, a fine old gnarled piece of womanhood, places the boy at school at Canterbury, where he makes acquaintance with Agnes, the woman whom he marries far, far on in the story; and with her father, Mr. Wickfield, a somewhat port wine-loving lawyer; and with Uriah Heep, the fawning villain of the piece. How David is first articled to a proctor in Doctors' Commons, and then becomes a reporter, and then a successful author; and how he marries his first wife, the childish Dora, who dies; and how, meanwhile, Uriah is effecting the general ruin, and aspiring to the hand of Agnes, till his villainies are detected and his machinations defeated by Micawber—how all this comes about, would be a long story to tell. But, as is usual with Dickens, there are subsidiary rills of story running into the main stream, and by one of these I should like to linger a moment. The head boy, and a kind of parlour-boarder, at Mr. Creakle's establishment, is one Steerforth, the spoilt only son of a widow. This Steerforth, David meets again when both are young men, and they go down together to Yarmouth, and there David is the means of making him known to a family of fisherfolk. He is rich, handsome, with an indescribable charm, according to his friends' testimony, and

he induces the fisherman's niece, the prettly Em'ly, to desert her home, and the young boat-builder to whom she is engaged, and to fly to Italy. Now to this story, as Dickens tell it, French criticism objects that he dwells exclusively on the sin and sorrow, and sets aside that in which the French novelist would delight, viz., the mad force and irresistible sway of passion. To which English criticism may, I think, reply, that the "pity of it," the wide-working desolation, are as essentially part of such an event as the passion; and, therefore, even from an exclusively artistic point of view, just as fit subjects for the novelist.

While "David Copperfield" was in progress, Dickens started on a new venture. He had often before projected a periodical, and twice, as we have seen—once in "Master Humphrey's Clock," and again as editor of the "Daily News"—had attempted quasi-journalism or its reality. But now at last he had struck the right vein. He had discovered a means of utilising his popularity, and imparting it to a paper, without being under the crushing necessity of writing the whole of that paper himself. The first number of "Household Words" appeared on the 30th of March, 1850.

The "preliminary word" heralds the paper in thoroughly characteristic fashion, and is, not unnaturally, far more personal in tone than the first leading article of the first number of the "Daily News," though that too, be it said in passing, bears traces, through all its officialism, of having come from the same pen.* In introducing "Household Words" to his new readers, Dickens speaks feelingly, eloquently, of his own position as a writer, and the responsibilities attached to his popularity, and tells of his hope that a future of instruction, and amusement, and kindly playful fancy may be in store for the paper. Nor were his happy anticipations belied. All that he had promised, he gave. "Household Words" found an entrance into innumerable homes, and was everywhere recognised as a friend. Never did editor more strongly impress his own personality upon his staff. The articles were sprightly, amusing, interesting, and instructive too—often very in-

* As, for instance, in such expressions as this: "The stamp on newspapers is not like the stamp on universal medicine bottles, which licenses anything, however false and monstrous."

structive, but always in an interesting way. That was one of the periodical's main features. The pill of knowledge was always presented gilt. Taking "Household Words" and "All the Year Round" together—and for this purpose they may properly be regarded as one and the same paper, because the change of name and proprietorship in 1859* brought no change in form or character—taking them together, I say, they contain a vast quantity of very pleasant, if not very profound, reading. Even apart from the stories, one can do very much worse than while away an hour, now and again, in gleaning here and there in their pages. Among Dickens's own contributions may be mentioned "The Child's History of England," and "The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices"—being the record of an excursion made by him in 1857, with Wilkie Collins; and "The Uncommercial Traveller" papers. While as to stories, "Hard Times" appeared in "Household Words"; and "A Tale of Two Cities" and "Great Expectations," in "All the Year Round." And to the Christmas numbers he gave some of his best and daintiest work. Nor were novels and tales by other competent hands wanting. Here it was that Mrs. Gaskell gave to the world those papers on "Cranford" that are so full of a dainty, delicate humour, and "My Lady Ludlow," and "North and South," and "A Dark Night's Work." Here, too, Wilkie Collins wove together his ingenious threads of plot and mystery in "The Moonstone," "The Woman in White," and "No Name." And here also Lord Lytton published "A Strange Story," and Charles Reade his "Hard Cash."

The year 1851 opened sadly for Dickens. His wife, who had been confined of a daughter in the preceding August, was so seriously unwell that he had to take her to Malvern. His father, to whom, notwithstanding all financial peculiarities and eccentricities, he was greatly attached, died on the 31st of March; and on the 14th of April his infant daughter died also. In connection with this latter death there occurred an incident of great pathos. Dickens had come up from Malvern on the 14th, to take the chair at the dinner on behalf of the Theatrical

* The last number of "Household Words" appeared on the 28th of May, 1858, and the first of "All the Year Round" on the 30th of April, 1859.

Fund, and looking in at Devonshire Terrace on his way, played with the children, as was his wont, and fondled the baby, and then went on to the London Tavern. Shortly after he left the house, the child died, suddenly. The news was communicated to Forster, who was also at the dinner, and he decided that it would be better not to tell the poor father till the speech of the evening had been made. So Dickens made his speech, and a brilliant one it was—it is brilliant even as one reads it now, in the coldness of print, without the glamour of the speaker's voice and presence; and yet brilliant with an undertone of sadness, which the recent death of the speaker's father would fully explain. And Forster, who knew of the yet later blow impending on his friend, had to sit by and listen as that dear friend, all unconscious of the dread application of the words, spoke of "the actor" having "sometimes to come from scenes of sickness, of suffering, ay, even of death itself, to play his part"; and then went on to tell how "all of us, in our spheres, have as often to do violence to our feelings, and to hide our hearts in fighting this great battle of life, and in discharging our duties and responsibilities."

In this same year, 1851, Dickens left the house in Devonshire Terrace, now grown too small for his enlarging household, and, after a long sojourn at Broadstairs, moved into Tavistock House, in Tavistock Square. Here "Bleak House" was begun at the end of November, the first number being published in the ensuing March. It is a fine work of art unquestionably, a very fine work of art—the canvas all crowded with living figures, and yet the main lines of the composition well-ordered and harmonious. Two threads of interest run through the story, one following the career of Lady Dedlock, and the other tracing the influence of a great Chancery suit on the victims immeshed in its toils. From the first these two threads are distinct, and yet happily interwoven. Let us take Lady Dedlock's thread first. She is the wife of Sir Leicester Dedlock, whose "family is as old as the hills, and a great deal more respectable," and she is still very beautiful, though no longer in the bloom of youth, and she is cold and haughty of manner, as a woman of highest fashion sometimes may be. But in her past lurks an ugly hidden secret; and a girl of sweetest disposition walks

her kindly course through the story, who might call Lady Dedlock "mother." This secret, or perhaps rather the fact that there is a secret at all, she reveals in a moment of surprise to the family lawyer; and she lays herself still further open to his suspicions by going, disguised in her maid's clothes, to the poor graveyard where her former lover lies buried. The lawyer worms the whole story out, and, just as he is going to reveal it, is murdered by the French maid aforesaid. But the murder comes too late to save my lady, nay, adds to her difficulties. She flies, in anticipation of the disclosure of her secret, and is found dead at the graveyard gate. To such end has the sin of her youth led her. So once again has Dickens dwelt, not on the passionate side of wrongful love, but on its sorrow. Now take the other thread—the Chancery suit—"Jarndyce *versus* Jarndyce," a suit held in awful reverence by the profession as a "monument of Chancery practice"—a suit seemingly interminable, till, after long, long years of wrangling and litigation, the fortuitous discovery of a will settles it all, with the result that the whole estate has been swallowed up in the costs. And how about the litigants? How about poor Richard Carstone and his wife, whom we see, in the opening of the story, in all the heyday and happiness of their youth, strolling down to the court—they are its wards—and wondering sadly over the "headache and heartache" of it all, and then saying, gleefully, "at all events Chancery will work none of its bad influence on *us*"? "None of its bad influence on *us*"!—poor lad, whose life is wasted and character impaired in following the mirage of the suit, and who is killed by the mockery of its end. Thus do the two intertwined stories run; but apart from these, though all in place and keeping, and helping on the general development, there is a whole profusion of noticeable characters. In enumerating them, however baldly, one scarcely knows where to begin. The lawyer group—clerks and all—is excellent. Dickens's early experiences stood him in good stead here. Excellent, too, are those studies in the ways of impecuniosity and practical shiftlessness, Harold Skimpole, the airy, irresponsible, light-hearted epicurean, with his pretty tastes and dilettante accomplishments, and Mrs. Jellyby, the philanthropist, whose eyes "see nothing nearer" than Borrioboola-Gha, on the banks of the far Niger, and

never dwell to any purpose on the utter discomfort of the home of her husband and children. Characters of this kind no one ever delineated better than Dickens. That Leigh Hunt, the poet and essayist, who had sat for the portrait of Skimpole, was not altogether flattered by the likeness, is comprehensible enough; and in truth it is unfair, both to painter and model, that we should take such portraits too seriously. Landor, who sat for the thunderous and kindly Boythorn, had more reason to be satisfied. Besides these one may mention Joe, the outcast; and Mr. Turveydrop, the beau of the school of the Regency—how horrified he would have been at the juxtaposition—and George, the keeper of the rifle gallery, a fine soldierly figure; and Mr. Bucket, the detective—though Dickens had a tendency to idealise the abilities of the police force. As to Sir Leicester Dedlock, I think he is, on the whole, "mine author's" best study of the aristocracy, a direction in which Dickens's forte did not lie, for Sir Leicester *is* a gentleman, and receives the terrible blow that falls upon him in a spirit at once chivalrous and human.

What between "Bleak House," "Household Words," and "The Child's History of England," Dickens, in the spring of 1853, was overworked and ill. Brighton failed to restore him; and he took his family over to Boulogne in June, occupying there a house belonging to a certain M. de Beaucourt. Town, dwelling, and landlord, all suited him exactly. Boulogne he declared to be admirable for its picturesqueness in buildings and life, and equal in some respects to Naples itself. The dwelling, "a doll's house of many rooms," embowered in roses, and with a terraced garden, was a place after his own heart. While as to the landlord—he was "wonderful." Dickens never tires of extolling his virtues, his generosity, his kindness, his anxiety to please, his pride in "the property." All the pleasant delicate quaint traits in the man's character are irradiated as if with French sunshine in his tenant's description. It is a dainty little picture and painted with the kindliest of brushes. Poor Beaucourt, he was "inconsolable" when he and Dickens finally parted three years afterwards—for twice again did the latter occupy a house, but not this same house, on "the property." Many were the tears that he shed, and even

the garden, the loved garden, went forlorn and unweeded. But that was in 1856. The parting was not so final and terrible in the October of 1853, when Dickens, having finished "Bleak House," started with Wilkie Collins, and Augustus Egg, the artist, for a holiday tour in Switzerland and Italy.

CHAPTER X.

On his return to England, just after the Christmas of 1853, Dickens gave his first public readings. He had read "The Chimes" some nine years before, to a select few among his literary friends; and at Lausanne he had similarly read portions of "Dombey and Son." But the three readings given at Birmingham, on the 27th, 29th, and 30th December, 1853, were, in every sense, public entertainments, and, except that the proceeds were devoted entirely to the local Institute, differed in no way from the famous readings by which he afterwards realised what may almost be called a fortune. The idea of coming before the world in this new character had long been in his mind. As early as 1846, after the private reading at Lausanne, he had written to Forster: "I was thinking the other day that in these days of lecturings and readings, a great deal of money might possibly be made (if it were not *infra dig.*) by one's having readings of one's own books. I think it would take immensely. What do you say?" Forster said then, and said consistently throughout, that he held the thing to *be "infra dig.,"* and unworthy of Dickens's position; and in this I think one may venture to assert that Forster was wrong. There can surely be no reason why a popular writer, who happens also to be an excellent elocutionist, should not afford general pleasure by giving sound to his prose, and a voice to his imaginary characters. Nor is it opposed to the fitness of things that he should be paid for his skill. If, however, one goes further in Dickens's case, and asks whether the readings did not involve too great an expenditure of time, energy, and, as we shall see, ultimately of life, and whether he would not, in the highest sense, have been better employed over his books—why then the

question becomes more difficult of solution. But, after all, each man must answer such questions for himself. Dickens may have felt, as the years began to tell, that he required the excitement of the readings for mental stimulus, and that he would not even have written as much as he did without them. Be that as it may, the success at Birmingham, where a sum of from £400 to £500 was realised, the requests that poured in upon him to read at other places, the invariably renewed success whenever he did so, the clear evidence that very much money might be earned if he determined to come forward on his own account, all must have contributed to scatter Forster's objections to the winds. On the 29th of April, 1858, at St. Martin's Hall, in London, he started his career as a paid public reader, and he continued to read, with shorter or longer periods of intermission, till his death. But into the story of his professional tours it is not my intention just now to enter. I shall only stay to say a few words about the character and quality of his readings.

That they were a success can readily be accounted for. The mere desire to see and hear Dickens, the great Dickens, the novelist who was more than popular, who was the object of real personal affection on the part of the English-speaking race—this would have drawn a crowd at any time. But Dickens was not the man to rely upon such sources of attraction, any more than an actress who is really an actress will consent to rely exclusively on her good looks. "Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well," such, as we have seen, was one of the governing principles of his life; and he read very well. Of nervousness there was no trace in his composition. To some one who asked him whether he ever felt any shyness as a speaker, he answered, "Not in the least; the first time I took the chair (at a public dinner) I felt as much confidence as if I had done the thing a hundred times." This of course helped him much as a reader, and gave him full command over all his gifts. But the gifts were also assiduously cultivated. He laboured, one might almost say, agonised, to make himself a master of the art. Mr. Dolby, who acted as his "manager," during the tours undertaken from 1866 to 1870, tells us that before producing "Dr. Marigold," he not only gave a kind of semi-public rehearsal, but had rehearsed it to

himself considerably over two hundred times. Writing to Forster Dickens says: "You have no idea how I have worked at them [the readings] . . . I have tested all the serious passion in them by everything I know; made the humorous points much more humorous; corrected my utterance of certain words; . . . I learnt 'Dombey' like the rest, and did it to myself often twice a day, with exactly the same pains as at night, over and over and over again."

The results justified the care and effort bestowed. There are, speaking generally, two schools of readers: those who dramatise what they read, and those who read simply, audibly, with every attention to emphasis and point, but with no effort to do more than slightly indicate differences of personage or character. To the latter school Thackeray belonged. He read so as to be perfectly heard, and perfectly understood, and so that the innate beauty of his literary style might have full effect. Dickens read quite differently. He read not as a writer to whom style is everything, but as an actor throwing himself into the world he wishes to bring before his hearers. He was so careless indeed of pure literature, in this particular matter, that he altered his books for the readings, eliminating much of the narrative, and emphasising the dialogue. He was pre-eminently the dramatic reader. Carlyle, who had been dragged to "Hanover Rooms," to "the complete upsetting," as he says, "of my evening habitudes, and spiritual composure," was yet constrained to declare: "Dickens does it capitally, such as *it* is; acts better than any Macready in the world; a whole tragic, comic, heroic, *theatre* visible, performing under one *hat*, and keeping us laughing—in a sorry way, some of us thought—the whole night. He is a good creature, too, and makes fifty or sixty pounds by each of these readings." "A whole theatre"—that is just the right expression minted for us by the great coiner of phrases. Dickens, by mere play of voice, for the gestures were comparatively sober, placed before you, on his imaginary stage, the men and women he had created. There Dr. Marigold pattered his cheap-jack phrases; and Mrs. Gamp and Betsy Prig, with throats rendered husky by much gin, had their memorable quarrel; and Sergeant Buzfuz bamboozled that stupid jury; and Boots at the

Swan told his pretty tale of child-elopement; and Fagin, in his hoarse Jew whisper, urged Bill Sikes to his last foul deed of murder. Ay me, in the great hush of the past there are tones of the reader's voice that still linger in my ears! I seem to hear once more the agonised quick utterance of poor Nancy, as she pleads for life, and the dread stillness after the ruffian's cruel blows have fallen on her upturned face. Again comes back to me the break in Bob Cratchit's voice, as he speaks of the death of Tiny Tim. As of old I listen to poor little Chops, the dwarf, declaring, very piteously, that his "fashionable friends" don't use him well, and put him on the mantel-piece when he refuses to "have in more champagne-wine," and lock him in the sideboard when he "wont give up his property." And I *see*—yes, I declare I *see*, as I saw when Dickens was reading, such was the illusion of voice and gesture—that dying flame of Scrooge's fire, which leaped up when Marley's ghost came in, and then fell again. Nor can I forbear to mention, among these reminiscences, that there is also a passage in one of Thackeray's lectures that is still in my ears as on the evening when I heard it. It is a passage in which he spoke of the love that children had for the works of his more popular rival, and told how his own children would come to him and ask, "Why don't you write books like Mr. Dickens?"

CHAPTER XI.

CHANCERY had occupied a prominent place in "Bleak House." Philosophical radicalism occupied the same kind of position in "Hard Times," which was commenced in the number of "Household Words" for the 1st of April, 1854. The book, when afterwards published in a complete form, bore a dedication to Carlyle; and very fittingly so, for much of its philosophy is his. Dickens, like Kingsley, and like Ruskin and Froude, and so many other men of genius and ability, had come under the influence of the old Chelsea sage.* And what are the ideas which

* Dickens did not accept the whole Carlyle creed. He retained a sort of belief in the collective wisdom of the people, which Carlyle certainly did not share.

"Hard Times" is thus intended to popularise? These: that men are not merely intellectual calculating machines, with reason and self-interest for motive power, but creatures possessing also affections, feelings, fancy—a whole world of emotions that lie outside the ken of the older school of political economists. Therefore, to imagine that they can live and flourish on facts alone is a fallacy and pernicious; as is also the notion that any human relations can be permanently established on a basis of pure supply and demand. If we add to this an unlimited contempt for Parliament, as a place where the national dustmen are continually stirring the national dust to no purpose at all, why then we are pretty well advanced in the philosophy of Carlyle. And how does Dickens illustrate these points? We are at Coketown, a place, as its name implies, of smoke and manufacture. Here lives and flourishes Thomas Gradgrind, "a man of realities; a man of facts and calculations"; not essentially a bad man, but bound in an iron system as in a vice. He brings up his children on knowledge, and enlightened self-interest exclusively; and the boy becomes a cub and a mean thief, and the girl marries, quite without love, a certain blustering Mr. Bounderby, and is as nearly as possible led astray by the first person who approaches her with the language of gallantry and sentiment. Mr. Bounderby, her husband, is, one may add, a man who, in mere lying bounce, makes out his humble origin to be more humble than it is. On the other side of the picture are Mr. Sleary and his circus troupe; and Cissy Jupe, the daughter of the clown; and the almost saintly figures of Stephen Blackpool, and Rachel, a working man and a working woman. With these people facts are as naught, and self-interest as dust in the balance. Mr. Sleary has a heart which no brandy-and-water can harden, and he enables Mr. Gradgrind to send off the wretched cub to America, refusing any guerdon but a glass of his favourite beverage. The circus troupe are kindly, simple, loving folk. Cissy Jupe proves the angel of the Gradgrind household. Stephen is the victim of unjust persecution on the part of his own class, is suspected, by young Gradgrind's machinations, of the theft committed by that young scoundrel, falls into a disused pit as he is coming to vindicate his character, and only lives long enough to forgive his wrongs, and clasp

in death the hand of Rachel—a hand which in life could not be his, as he had a wife alive who was a drunkard and worse. A marked contrast, is it not? On one side all darkness, and on the other all light. The demons of fact and self-interest opposed to the angels of fancy and unselfishness. A contrast too violent unquestionably. Exaggeration is the fault of the novel. One may at once allow, for instance, that Rachel and Stephen, though human nature in its infinite capacity may include such characters, are scarcely a typical working woman and working man. But then neither, heaven be praised, are Coupeau the sot, and Gervaise the drab, in M. Zola's "Drink"—and, for my part, I think Rachel and Stephen the better company.

"Sullen socialism"—such is Macaulay's view of the political philosophy of "Hard Times." "Entirely right in main drift and purpose"—such is the verdict of Ruskin. Who shall decide between the two? or, if a decision be necessary, then I would venture to say, yes, entirely right in feeling. Dickens is right in sympathy for those who toil and suffer, right in desire to make their lives more human and beautiful, right in belief that the same human heart beats below all class distinctions. But, beyond this, a novelist only, not a philosopher, not fitted to grapple effectively with complex social and political problems, and to solve them to right conclusions. There are some things unfortunately which even the best and kindest instincts cannot accomplish.

The last chapter of "Hard Times" appeared in the number of "Household Words" for the 12th of August, 1854, and the first number of "Little Dorrit" came out at Christmas, 1855. Between those dates a great war had waxed and waned. The heart of England had been terribly moved by the story of the sufferings and privations which the army had had to undergo amid the snows of a Russian winter. From the trenches before Sebastopol the newspaper correspondents had sent terrible accounts of death and disease, and of ills which, as there seemed room for suspicion, might have been prevented by better management. Through long disuse the army had rusted in its scabbard, and everything seemed to go wrong but the courage of officers and men. A great demand arose for reform in the whole administration of the country. A

movement, now much forgotten, though not fruitless at the time, was started for the purpose of making the civil service more efficient, and putting John Bull's house in order. "Administrative Reform," such was the cry of the moment, and Dickens uttered it with the full strength of his lungs. He attended a great meeting held at Drury Lane Theatre on the 27th of June, in furtherance of the cause, and made what he declared to be his first political speech. He spoke on the subject again at the dinner of the Theatrical Fund. He urged on his friends in the press to the attack. He was in the forefront of the battle. And when his next novel, "Little Dorrit," appeared, there was the Civil Service, like a sort of gibbeted Punch, executing the strangest antics.

But the "Circumlocution Office," where the clerks sit lazily devising all day long "how *not* to do" the business of the country, and devote their energies alternately to marmalade and general insolence—the "Circumlocution Office" occupies after all only a secondary position in the book. The main interest of it circles round the place that had at one time been almost a home to Dickens. Again he drew upon his earlier experiences. We are once more introduced into a debtors' prison. Little Dorrit is the child of the Marshalsea, born and bred within its walls, the sole living thing about the place on which its taint does not fall. Her worthless brother, her sister, her father—who is not only her father, but the "Father of the Marshalsea"—the prison blight is on all three. Her father especially is a piece of admirable character-drawing. Dickens has often been accused of only catching the surface peculiarities of his personages, their outward tricks, and obvious habits of speech and of mind. Such a study as Mr. Dorrit would alone be sufficient to rebut the charge. No novelist specially famed for dissecting character to its innermost recesses could exhibit a finer piece of mental analysis. We follow the poor weak creature's deterioration from the time when the helpless muddle in his affairs brings him into durance. We note how his sneaking pride seems to feed even on the garbage of his degradation. We see how little inward change there is in the man himself when there comes a transformation scene in his fortunes, and he leaves the Marshalsea wealthy and prosperous. It is all thoroughly worked out, perfect,

a piece of really great art. No wonder that Mr. Clennam pities the child of such a father; indeed, considering what a really admirable woman she is, one only wonders that his pity does not sooner turn to love.

"Little Dorrit" ran its course from December, 1855, to June, 1857, and within that space of time there occurred two or three incidents in Dickens's career which should not pass unnoticed. At the first of these dates he was in Paris, where he remained till the middle of May, 1856, greatly fêted by the French world of letters and art; dining hither and thither; now enjoying an Arabian Nights sort of banquet given by Émile de Girardin, the popular journalist; now meeting George Sand, the great novelist, whom he describes as "just the sort of woman in appearance whom you might suppose to be the queen's monthly nurse—chubby, matronly, swarthy, black-eyed"; then studying French art, and contrasting it with English art, somewhat to the disadvantage of the latter; anon superintending the translation of his works into French, and working hard at "Little Dorrit"; and all the while frequenting the Paris theatres with great assiduity and admiration. Meanwhile, too, on the 14th of March, 1856, a Friday, his lucky day as he considered it, he had written a cheque for the purchase of Gadshill Place, at which he had so often looked when a little lad, living penuriously at Chatham—the house which it had been the object of his childish ambition to win for his own.

So had merit proved to be not without its visible prize, literally a prize for good conduct. He took possession of the house in the following February, and turned workmen into it, and finished "Little Dorrit" there. At first the purchase was intended mainly as an investment, and he only purposed to spend some portion of his time at Gadshill, letting it at other periods, and so recouping himself for the interest on the £1,790 which it had cost, and for the further sums which he expended on improvements. But as time went on it became his hobby, the love of his advancing years. He beautified here and beautified there, built a new drawing-room, added bedrooms, constructed a tunnel under the road, erected in the "wilderness" on the other side of the road a Swiss chalet, which had been presented to him by Fechter, the French-English actor,

and in short indulged in all the thousand and one vagaries of a proprietor who is enamoured of his property. The matter seems to have been one of the family jokes; and when, on the Sunday before his death, he showed the conservatory to his younger daughter, and said, "Well Katey, now you see *positively* the last improvement at Gadshill," there was a general laugh. But this is far on in the story; and very long before the building of the conservatory, long indeed before the main other changes had been made, the idea of an investment had been abandoned. In 1860 he sold Tavistock House, in London, and made Gadshill Place his final home.

Even here, however, I am anticipating; for before getting to 1860 there is in Dickens's history a page which one would willingly turn over, if that were possible, in silence and sadness. But it is not possible. No account of his life would be complete, and what is of more importance, true, if it made no mention of his relations with his wife.

For some time before 1858 Dickens had been in an over-excited, nervous, morbid state. During earlier manhood his animal spirits and fresh energy had been superb. Now, as the years advanced, and especially at this particular time, the energy was the same; but it was accompanied by something of feverishness and disease. He could not be quiet. In the autumn of 1857 he wrote to Forster, "I have now no relief but in action. I am become incapable of rest. I am quite confident I should rust, break, and die if I spared myself. Much better to die doing." And again, a little later, "If I couldn't walk fast and far, I should just explode and perish." It was the foreshadowing of such utterances as these, and the constant wanderings to and fro for readings and theatricals and what not, that led Harriet Martineau, who had known and greatly liked Dickens, to say after perusing the second volume of his life, "I am much struck by his hysterical restlessness. It must have been terribly wearing to his wife." On the other hand, there can be no manner of doubt that his wife wore *him*. "Why is it, he had said to Forster in one of the letters from which I have just quoted, "that, as with poor David (Copperfield), a sense comes always crushing on me now, when I fall into low spirits, as of one happiness I have missed in life, and one

friend and companion I have never made?" And again: "I find that the skeleton in my domestic closet is becoming a pretty big one." Then come even sadder confidences: "Poor Catherine and I are not made for each other, and there is no help for it. It is not only that she makes me uneasy and unhappy, but that I make her so, too, and much more so. She is exactly what you know in the way of being amiable and complying; but we are strangely ill-assorted for the bond there is between us. . . . Her temperament will not go with mine." And at last, in March, 1858, two months before the end: "It is not with me a matter of will, or trial, or sufferance, or good-humour, or making the best of it, or making the worst of it, any longer. It is all despairingly over." So, after living together for twenty years, these two went their several ways in May, 1858. Dickens allowed to his wife an income of £600 a year, and the eldest son went to live with her. The other children and their aunt, Miss Hogarth, remained with Dickens himself.

Scandal has not only a poisonous, but a busy tongue, and when a well-known public man and his wife agree to live apart, the beldame seldom neglects to give her special version of the affair. So it happened here. Some miserable rumour was whispered about to the detriment of Dickens's morals. He was at the time, as we have seen, in an utterly morbid, excited state, sore doubtless with himself, and altogether out of mental condition, and the lie stung him almost to madness. He published an article branding it as it deserved in the number of "Household Words" for the 12th of June, 1858.

So far his course of action was justifiable. Granted that it was judicious to notice the rumour at all, and to make his private affairs the matter of public comment, then there was nothing in the terms of the article to which objection could be taken. It contained no reflection of any kind on Mrs. Dickens. It was merely an honest man's indignant protest against an anonymous libel which implicated others as well as himself. Whether the publication, however, was judicious is a different matter. Forster thinks not. He holds that Dickens had altogether exaggerated the public importance of the rumour, and the extent of its circulation. And this, according to my own recollection, is entirely true. I was a lad at the time, but

a great lover of Dickens's works, as most lads then were, and I well remember the feeling of surprise and regret which that article created among us of the general public. At the same time, it is only fair to Dickens to recollect that the lying story was, at least, so far fraught with danger to his reputation, that Mrs. Dickens would seem for a time to have believed it; and further, that Dickens occupied a very peculiar position towards the public, and a position that might well in his own estimation, and even in ours, give singular importance to the general belief in his personal character.

This point will bear dwelling upon. Dickens claimed, and claimed truly, that the relation between himself and the public was one of exceptional sympathy and affection. Perhaps an illustration will best show what that kind of relationship was. Thackeray tells of two ladies with whom he had, at different times, discussed "A Christmas Carol," and how each had concluded by saying of the author, "God bless him!" God bless him!—that was the sort of feeling towards himself which Dickens had succeeded in producing in most English hearts. He had appealed from the first and so constantly to every kind and gentle emotion, had illustrated so often what is good and true in human character, had pleaded the cause of the weak and suffering with such assiduity, had been so scathingly indignant at all wrong; and he had, moreover, shown such a manly and chivalrous purity in all his utterances with regard to women, that his readers felt for him a kind of personal tenderness, quite distinct from their mere admiration for his genius as a writer. Nor was that feeling based on his books alone. So far as one could learn at the time, no great dissimilarity existed between the author and the man. We all remember Byron's corrosive remark on the sentimentalist Sterne, that he "whined over a dead ass, and allowed his mother to die of hunger." But Dickens's feelings were by no means confined to his pen. He was known to be a good father and a good friend, and of perfect truth and honesty. The kindly tolerance for the frailties of a father or brother which he admired in Little Dorrit, he was ready to extend to his own father and his own brother. He was most assiduous in the prosecution of his craft as a writer, and yet had time and leisure of heart at command for all kinds

of good and charitable work. His private character had so far stood above all floating cloud of suspicion.

That Dickens felt an honourable pride in the general affection he inspired, can readily be understood. He also felt, even more honourably, its great responsibility. He knew that his books and he himself were a power for good, and he foresaw how greatly his influence would suffer if a suspicion of hypocrisy—the vice at which he had always girded—were to taint his reputation. Here, for instance, in "Little Dorrit," the work written in the thick of his home troubles, he had written of Clennam as "a man who had, deep-rooted in his nature, a belief in all the gentle and good things his life had been without," and had shown how this belief had "saved Clennam still from the whimpering weakness and cruel selfishness of holding that because such a happiness or such a virtue had not come into his little path, or worked well for him, therefore it was not in the great scheme, but was reducible, when found in appearance, to the basest elements." A touching utterance if it expressed the real feeling of a writer sorely disappointed and in great trouble; but an utterance moving rather to contempt if it came from a writer who had transferred his affections from his wife to some other woman. I do not wonder, therefore, that Dickens, excited and exasperated, spoke out, though I think it would have been better if he had kept silence.

But he did other things that were not justifiable. He quarrelled with Messrs. Bradbury and Evans, his publishers, because they did not use their influence to get "Punch," a periodical in which Dickens had no interest, to publish the personal statement that had appeared in "Household Words"; and worse, much worse, he wrote a letter, which ought never to have been written, detailing the grounds on which he and his wife had separated. This letter, dated the 28th of May, 1858, was addressed to his secretary, Arthur Smith, and was to be shown to any one interested. Arthur Smith showed it to the London correspondent of the New York "Tribune," who naturally caused it to be published in that paper. Then Dickens was horrified. He was a man of far too high and chivalrous feeling not to know that the letter contained statements with regard to his wife's failings which ought never to have been made public. He knew as well as any one,

that a literary man ought not to take the world into his confidence on such a subject. Ever afterwards he referred to the letter as his "violated letter." But, in truth, the wrong went deeper than the publication. The letter should never have been written, certainly never sent to Arthur Smith for general perusal. Dickens's only excuse is the fact that he was clearly not himself at the time, and that he never fell into a like error again. It is, however, sad to notice how entirely his wife seems to have passed out of his affection. The reference to her in his will is almost unkind; and when death was on him she seems not to have been summoned to his bedside.

CHAPTER XII.

DICKENS's career as a reader reading for money commenced on the 29th of April, 1858, while the trouble about his wife was at the thickest; and, after reading in London on sixteen nights, he made a reading tour in the provinces, and in Scotland and Ireland. In the following year he read likewise. But meanwhile, which is more important to us than his readings, he was writing another book. On the 30th of April, 1859, in the first number of "All the Year Round,"* was begun "A Tale of Two Cities," a simultaneous publication in monthly parts being also commenced.

"A Tale of Two Cities" is a tale of the great French Revolution, and the two cities in question are London and Paris—London as it lay comparatively at peace in the days when George III. was king, and Paris running blood and writhing in the fierce fire of anarchy and mob rule. A powerful book, unquestionably. No doubt there is in its heat and glare a reflection from Carlyle's "French Revolution," a book for which Dickens had the greatest admiration. But that need not be regarded as a demerit. Dickens is no pale copyist, and adds fervour to what he borrows. His pictures of Paris in revolution are as fine as the London scenes in "Barnaby Rudge"; and the in-

* His foolish quarrel with Bradbury and Evans had necessitated the abandonment of "Household Words."

terweaving of the story with public events is even better managed in the later book than in the earlier story of the Gordon Riots. And the story, what does it tell? It tells of a certain Dr. Manette, who, after long years of imprisonment in the Bastille, is restored to his daughter in London; and of a young French noble, who has assumed the name of Darnay, and left France in horror of the doings of his order, and who marries Dr. Manette's daughter; and of a young English barrister, able enough in his profession, but careless of personal success, and much addicted to port wine, and bearing a striking personal resemblance to the young French noble. These persons, and others, being drawn to Paris by various strong inducements, Darnay is condemned to death as a *ci-devant* noble, and the ne'er-do-weel barrister, out of the great pure love he bears to Darnay's wife, succeeds in dying for him. That is the tale's bare outline; and if any one says of the book that it is in parts melodramatic, one may fitly answer that never was any portion of the world's history such a thorough piece of melodrama as the French Revolution.

With "A Tale of Two Cities" Hablot K. Browne's connection with Dickens, as the illustrator of his books, came to an end. The "Sketches" had been illustrated by Cruikshank, who was the great popular illustrator of the time, and it is amusing to read, in the preface to the first edition of the first series, published in 1836, how the trembling young author placed himself, as it were, under the protection of the "well-known individual who had frequently contributed to the success of similar undertakings." Cruikshank also illustrated "Oliver Twist"; and indeed, with an arrogance which unfortunately is not incompatible with genius, afterwards set up a rather preposterous claim to have been the real originator of that book, declaring that he had worked out the story in a series of etchings, and that Dickens had illustrated *him*, and not he Dickens.* But apart from the drawings for the "Sketches" and "Oliver Twist," and the first few drawings by Seymour and two drawings by Buss† in "Pick-

* See his pamphlet, "The Artist and the Author." The matter is fully discussed in his life by Mr. Blanchard Jerrold.

† Buss's illustrations were executed under great disadvantages, and are bad. Those of Seymour are excellent.

wick," and some drawings by Cattermole in "Master Humphrey's Clock," and by Samuel Palmer in the "Pictures from Italy," and by various hands in the Christmas stories—apart from these, Browne, or "Phiz," had executed the illustrations to Dickens's novels. Nor, with all my admiration for certain excellent qualities which his work undeniably possessed, do I think that this was altogether a good thing. Such, I know, is not a popular opinion. But I confess I am unable to agree with those critics who, from their remarks on the jubilee edition of "Pickwick," seem to think his illustrations so pre-eminently fine that they should be permanently associated with Dickens's stories. The editor of that edition was, in my view, quite right in treating Browne's illustrations as practically obsolete. The value of Dickens's works is perennial, and Browne's illustrations represent the art fashion of a time only. So, too, I am unable to see any great cause to regret that Cruikshank's artistic connection with Dickens came to an end so soon.* For both Browne and Cruikshank were pre-eminently caricaturists, and caricaturists of an old school. The latter had no idea of beauty. His art, very great art in its way, was that of grotesqueness and exaggeration. He never drew a lady or gentleman in his life. And though Browne, in my view much the lesser artist, was superior in these respects to Cruikshank, yet he, too, drew the most hideous Pecksniffs, and Tom Pinches, and Joey B.'s, and a whole host of characters quite unreal and absurd. The mischief of it is, too, that Dickens's humour will not bear caricaturing. The defect of his own art as a writer is that it verges itself too often on caricature. Exaggeration is its bane. When for instance, he makes the rich alderman in "The Chimes" eat up poor Trotty Veck's little last tit-bit of tripe, we are clearly in the region of broad farce. When Mr. Pancks, in "Little Dorrit," so far abandons the ordinary ways of mature rent collectors as to ask a respectable old accountant to "give him a back," in the Marshalsea court, and leaps over his head, we are obviously in a world of pantomime. Dickens's comic effects are generally quite forced enough, and should never be further forced when translated into the sister art of drawing. Rather,

* I am always sorry, however, that Cruikshank did not illustrate the Christmas stories.

if anything, should they be attenuated. But unfortunately exaggeration happened to be inherent in the draftsmanship of both Cruikshank and Browne. And, having said this, I may as well finish with the subject of the illustrations to Dickens's books. "Our Mutual Friend" was illustrated by Marcus Stone, R.A., then a rising young artist, and the son of Dickens's old friend Frank Stone. Here the designs fall into the opposite defect. They are, some of them, pretty enough, but they want character. Fildes's pictures for "Edwin Drood" are a decided improvement. As to the illustrations for the later "Household Edition," they are very inferior. The designs for a great many are clearly bad, and the mechanical execution almost uniformly so. Even Barnard's skill has had no fair chance against poor woodcutting, careless engraving, and inferior paper. And this is the more to be regretted, in that Barnard, by natural affinity of talent, has, to my thinking, done some of the best art work that has been done at all in connection with Dickens. His "Character Sketches," especially the lithographed series, are admirable. The Jingle is a masterpiece; but all are good, and he even succeeds in making something pictorially acceptable of Little Nell and Little Dorrit.

Just a year, almost to a day, elapsed between the conclusion of "A Tale of Two Cities," and the commencement of "Great Expectations." The last chapter of the former appeared in the number of "All the Year Round" for the 26th of November, 1859, and the first chapter of the latter in the number of the same periodical for the 1st of December, 1860. Poor Pip—for such is the name of the hero of the book—poor Pip, I think he is to be pitied. Certainly he lays himself open to the charge of snobbishness, and is unduly ashamed of his connections. But then circumstances were decidedly against him. Through some occult means he is removed from his natural sphere, from the care of his "rampageous" sister, and of her husband, the good, kind, honest Joe, and taken up to London, and brought up as a gentleman, and started in chambers in Barnard's Inn. All this is done through the instrumentality of Mr. Jaggers, a barrister in highest repute among the criminal brotherhood. But Pip not unnaturally thinks that his unknown benefactress is a certain Miss Havisham, who, having been bitterly wronged

in her love affairs, lives in eccentric fashion near his native place, amid the mouldering mementoes of her wedding day. What is his horror when he finds that his education, comfort, and prospects have no more reputable foundation than the bounty of a murderous criminal called Magwitch, who has showered all these benefits upon him from the antipodes, in return for the gift of food and a file when he, Magwitch, was trying to escape from the hulks, and Pip was a little lad. Magwitch, the transported convict, comes back to England, at the peril of his life, to make himself known to Pip, and to have the pleasure of looking at that young gentleman. He is again tracked by the police, and caught, notwithstanding Pip's efforts to get him off, and dies in prison. Pip ultimately, very ultimately, marries a young lady oddly brought up by the queer Miss Havisham, and who turns out to be Magwitch's daughter.

Such, as I have had occasion to say before in speaking of similar analyses, such are the dry bones of the story. Pip's character is well drawn. So is that of Joe. And Mr. Jaggers, the criminal's friend, and his clerk, Wemmick, are striking and full of grim humour. Miss Havisham and her *protégée*, Estella, whom she educates to be the scourge of men, belong to what may be called the melodramatic side of Dickens's art. They take their place with Mrs. Dombey and with Miss Dartle in "David Copperfield," and Miss Wade in "Little Dorrit"—female characters of a fantastic and haughty type, and quite devoid, Miss Dartle and Miss Wade especially, of either verisimilitude or the milk of human kindness.

"Great Expectations" was completed in August, 1861, and the first number of "Our Mutual Friend" appeared in May, 1864. This was an unusual interval, but the great writer's faculty of invention was beginning to lose its fresh spring and spontaneity. And besides he had not been idle. Though writing no novel, he had been busy enough with readings, and his work on "All the Year Round." He had also written a short, but very graceful paper* on Thackeray, whose death, on the Christmas Eve of 1863, had greatly affected him. Now, however, he again braced himself for one of his greater efforts.

Scarcely, I think, as all will agree, with the old success.

* See "Cornhill Magazine" for February, 1864.

In "Our Mutual Friend" he is not at his best. It is a strange complicated story that seems to have some difficulty in unravelling itself: the story of a man who pretends to be dead in order that he may, under a changed name, investigate the character and eligibility of the young woman whom an erratic father has destined to be his bride; a golden-hearted old dust contractor, who hides a will that will give him all that erratic father's property, and disinherit the man aforesaid, and who, to crown his virtues, pretends to be a miser in order to teach the young woman, also aforesaid, how bad it is to be mercenary, and to induce her to marry the unrecognised and seemingly penniless son; their marriage accordingly, with ultimate result that the bridegroom turns out to be no poor clerk, but the original heir, who, of course, is not dead, and is the inheritor of thousands; subsidiary groups of characters, one among which I think rather uninteresting, of some brand-new people called the Veneerings and their acquaintances, for they have no friends; and some fine sketches of the river-side population; striking and amusing characters, too—Silas Wegg, the scoundrelly vendor of songs, who ferrets among the dust for wills in order to confound the good dustman, his benefactor; and the little deformed dolls' dressmaker, with her sot of a father; and Betty Higden, the sturdy old woman who has determined neither in life nor death to suffer the pollution of the workhouse; such, with more added, are the ingredients of the story.

One episode, however, deserves longer comment. It is briefly this: Eugene Wrayburn is a young barrister of good family and education, and of excellent abilities and address, all gifts that he has turned to no creditable purpose whatever. He falls in with a girl, Lizzie Hexam, of more than humble rank, but of great beauty and good character. She interests him, and in mere wanton carelessness, for he certainly has no idea of offering marriage, he gains her affection, neither meaning, in any definite way, to do anything good nor anything bad with it. There is another man who loves Lizzie, a schoolmaster, who, in his dull, plodding way, has made the best of his intellect, and risen in life. He naturally, and we may say properly, for no good can come of them, resents Wrayburn's attentions, as does the girl's brother. Wrayburn

uses the superior advantages of his position to insult them in the most offensive and brutal manner, and to torture the schoolmaster, just as he has used those advantages to win the girl's heart. Whereupon, after being goaded to heart's desire for a considerable time, the schoolmaster as nearly as possible beats out Wrayburn's life, and commits sucide. Wrayburn is rescued by Lizzie as he lies by the river bank sweltering in blood, and tended by her, and they are married and live happy ever afterwards.

Now the amazing part of this story is, that Dickens's sympathies throughout are with Wrayburn. How this comes to be so I confess I do not know. To me Wrayburn's conduct appears to be heartless, cruel, unmanly, and the use of his superior social position against the schoolmaster to be like a foul blow, and quite unworthy of a gentleman. Schoolmasters ought not to beat people about the head, decidedly. But if Wrayburn's thoughts took a right course during convalescence, I think he may have reflected that he deserved his beating, and also that the woman whose affection he had won was a great deal too good for him.

Dickens's misplaced sympathy in this particular story has, I repeat, always struck me with amazement. Usually his sympathies are so entirely right. Nothing is more common than to hear the accusation of vulgarity made against his books. A certain class of people seem to think, most mistakenly, that because he so often wrote about vulgar people, uneducated people, people in the lower ranks of society, therefore his writing was vulgar, nay more, he himself vulgar, too. Such an opinion can only be based on a strange confusion between subject and treatment. There is scarcely any subject not tainted by impurity, that cannot be treated with entire refinement. Washington Irving wrote to Dickens, most justly, of "that exquisite tact that enabled him to carry his reader through the veriest dens of vice and villainy without a breath to shock the ear or a stain to sully the robe of the most shrinking delicacy"; and added: "It is a rare gift to be able to paint low life without being low, and to be comic without the least taint of vulgarity." This is well said; and if we look for the main secret of the inherent refinement of Dickens's books, we shall find it, I think, in this: that he never intentionally paltered with

right and wrong. He would make allowance for evil, would take pleasure in showing that there were streaks of lingering good in its blackness, would treat it kindly, gently, humanly. But it always stood for evil, and nothing else. He made no attempt by cunning jugglery to change its seeming. He had no sneaking affection for it. And therefore, I say again, his attachment to Eugene Wrayburn has always struck me with surprise. As regards Dickens's own refinement, I cannot perhaps do better than quote the words of Sir Arthur Helps, an excellent judge. "He was very refined in his conversation —at least, what I call refined—for he was one of those persons in whose society one is comfortable from the certainty that they will never say anything which can shock other people, or hurt their feelings, be they ever so fastidious or sensitive."

CHAPTER XIII.

But we are now, alas, nearing the point where the "rapid" of Dickens's life began to "shoot to its fall." The year 1865, during which he partly wrote "Our Mutual Friend," was a fatal one in his career. In the month of February he had been very ill, with an affection of the left foot, at first thought to be merely local, but which really pointed to serious mischief, and never afterwards wholly left him. Then, on June 9th, when returning from France, where he had gone to recruit, he as nearly as possible lost his life in a railway accident at Staplehurst. A bridge had broken in; some of the carriages fell through, and were smashed; that in which Dickens was, hung down the side of the chasm. Of courage and presence of mind he never showed any lack. They were evinced, on one occasion, at the readings, when an alarm of fire arose. They shone conspicuous here. He quieted two ladies who were in the same compartment of the carriage; helped to extricate them and others from their perilous position; gave such help as he could to the wounded and dying; probably was the means of saving the life of one man, whom he was the first to hear faintly

groaning under a heap of wreckage; and then, as he tells in the "postscript" to the book, scrambled back into the carriage to find the crumpled MS. of a portion of "Our Mutual Friend." But even pluck is powerless to prevent a ruinous shock to the nerves. Though Dickens had done so manfully what he had to do at the time, he never fully recovered from the blow. His daughter tells us how he would often, "when travelling home from London, suddenly fall into a paroxysm of fear, tremble all over, clutch the arms of the railway carriage, large beads of perspiration standing on his face, and suffer agonies of terror. . . . He had . . . apparently no idea of our presence." And Mr. Dolby tells us also how in travelling it was often necessary for him to ward off such attacks by taking brandy. Dickens had been failing before only too surely; and this accident, like a coward's blow, struck him heavily as he fell.

But whether failing or stricken, he bated no jot of energy or courage; nay, rather, as his health grew weaker, did he redouble the pressure of his work. I think there is a grandeur in the story of the last five years of his life, that dwarfs even the tale of his rapid and splendid rise. It reads like some antique myth of the Titans defying Jove's thunder. There is about the man something indomitable and heroic. He had, as we have seen, given a series of readings in 1858–59; and he gave another in the years 1861 to 1863—successful enough in a pecuniary sense, but through failure of business capacity on the part of the manager, entailing on the reader himself a great deal of anxiety and worry.* Now, in the spring of 1866, with his left foot giving him unceasing trouble, and his nerves shattered, and his heart in an abnormal state, he accepted an offer from Messrs. Chappell to read "in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Paris," for £1,500, and the payment of all expenses, and then to give forty-two more readings for £2,500. Mr. Dolby, who accompanied Dickens as business manager in this and the remaining tours, has told their story in an interesting volume.† Of course the wear was immense. The readings themselves involved enormous fatigue to one who so identified him-

* He computed that he had made £12,000 by the first two series of readings.

† "Charles Dickens as I Knew Him." By George Dolby.

self with what he read, and whose whole being seemed to vibrate not only with the emotions of the characters in his stories, but of the audience. Then there was the weariness of long railway journeys in all seasons and weathers—journeys that at first must have been rendered doubly tedious, as he could not bear to travel by express trains. Yet, notwithstanding failure of strength, notwithstanding fatigue, his native gaiety and good spirits smile like a gleam of winter sunlight over the narrative. As he had been the brightest and most genial of companions in the old holiday days when strolling about the country with his actor-troupe, so now he was occasionally as frolic as a boy, dancing a hornpipe in the train for the amusement of his companions, compounding bowls of punch in which he shared but sparingly—for he was really convivial only in idea—and always considerate and kindly towards his companions and dependants. And mingled pathetically with all this are confessions of pain, weariness, illness, faintness, sleeplessness, internal bleeding—all bravely borne, and never for an instant suffered to interfere with any business arrangement.

But if the strain of the readings was too heavy here at home, what was it likely to be during a winter in America? Nevertheless he determined, against all remonstrances, to go thither. It would almost seem as if he felt that the day of his life was waning, and that it was his duty to gather in a golden harvest for those he loved ere the night came on. So he sailed for Boston once more on the 9th of November, 1867. The Americans, it must be said, behaved nobly. All the old grudges connected with the "American Notes," and "Martin Chuzzlewit," sank into oblivion. The reception was everywhere enthusiastic, the success of the readings immense. Again and again people waited all night, amid the rigours of an almost arctic winter, in order to secure an opportunity of purchasing tickets as soon as the ticket office opened. There were enormous and intelligent audiences at Boston, New York, Washington, Philadelphia—everywhere. The sum which Dickens realised by the tour, amounted to the splendid total of nearly £19,000. Nor, in this money triumph, did he fail to excite his usual charm of personal fascination, though the public affection and enthusiasm were manifested in forms less objectionable and offensive

than of old. On his birthday, the 7th of February, 1868, he says, "I couldn't help laughing at myself . . .; it was observed so much as though I were a little boy." Flowers, garlands were set about his room; there were presents on his dinner-table, and in the evening the hall where he read was decorated by kindly unknown hands. Of public and private entertainment he might have had just as much as he chose.

But to this medal there was a terrible reverse. Travelling from New York to Boston, just before Christmas, he took a most disastrous cold, which never left him so long as he remained in the country. He was constantly faint. He ate scarcely anything. He slept very little. Latterly he was so lame, as scarcely to be able to walk. Again and again it seemed impossible that he should fulfil his night's engagement. He was constantly so exhausted at the conclusion of the reading, that he had to lie down for twenty minutes or half an hour, "before he could undergo the fatigue even of dressing." Mr. Dolby lived in daily fear lest he should break down altogether. "I used to steal into his room," he says, "at all hours of the night and early morning, to see if he were awake, or in want of anything; always though to find him wide awake, and as cheerful and jovial as circumstances would admit—never in the least complaining, and only reproaching me for not taking my night's rest." "Only a man of iron will could have accomplished what he did," says Mr. Fields, who knew him well, and saw him often during the tour.

In the first week of May, 1868, Dickens was back in England, and soon again in the thick of his work and play. Mr. Wills, the sub-editor of "All the Year Round," had met with an accident. Dickens supplied his place. Chauncy Hare Townshend had asked him to edit a chaotic mass of religious lucubrations. He toilfully edited them. Then, with the autumn, the readings began again—for it marks the indomitable energy of the man that, even amid the terrible physical trials incident to his tour in America, he had agreed with Messrs. Chappell, for a sum of £8,000, to give one hundred more readings after his return. So in October the old work began again, and he was here, there, and everywhere, now reading at Manchester and Liverpool, now at Edinburgh and Glasgow,

anon coming back to read fitfully in London, then off again to Ireland, or the West of England. Nor is it necessary to say that he spared himself not one whit. In order to give novelty to these readings, which were to be positively the last, he had laboriously got up the scene of Nancy's murder, in "Oliver Twist," and persisted in giving it night after night, though of all his readings it was the one that exhausted him most terribly.* But of course this could not last. The pain in his foot "was always recurring at inconvenient and unexpected moments," says Mr. Dolby, and occasionally the American cold came back, too. In February, in London, the foot was worse than it had ever been, so bad that Sir Henry Thompson, and Mr. Beard, his medical adviser, compelled him to postpone a reading. At Edinburgh, a few days afterwards, Mr. Syme, the eminent surgeon, strongly recommended perfect rest. Still he battled on, but "with great personal suffering such as few men could have endured." Sleeplessness was on him, too. And still he fought on, determined, if it were physically possible, to fulfil his engagement with Messrs. Chappell, and complete the hundred nights. But it was not to be. Symptoms set in that pointed alarmingly towards paralysis of the left side. At Preston, on the 22nd of April, Mr. Beard, who had come post-haste from London, put a stop to the readings, and afterwards decided, in consultation with Sir Thomas Watson, that they ought to be suspended entirely for the time, and never resumed in connection with any railway travelling.

Even this, however, was not quite the end; for a summer of comparative rest, or what Dickens considered rest, seemed so far to have set him up that he gave a final series of twelve readings in London between the 11th of January and 15th of March, 1870, thus bringing to its real conclusion an enterprise by which, at whatever cost to himself, he had made a sum of about £45,000.

Meanwhile, in the autumn of 1869, he had gone back to the old work, and was writing a novel, "The Mystery of Edwin Drood." It is a good novel unquestionably.

* Mr. Dolby remonstrated on this, and it was in connection with a very slight show of temper on the occasion that he says: "In all my experiences with the Chief that was the only time I ever heard him address angry words to any one."

Without going so far as Longfellow, who had doubts whether it was not "the most beautiful of all" Dickens's works, one may admit that there is about it a singular freshness, and no sign at all of mental decay. As for the "mystery," I do not think *that* need baffle us altogether. But then I see no particular reason to believe that Dickens had wished to baffle us, or specially to rival Edgar Allan Poe or Wilkie Collins in the construction of criminal puzzles. Even though only half the case is presented to us, and the book remains for ever unfinished, we need have, I think, no difficulty in working out its conclusion. The course pursued by Mr. Jasper, Lay Precentor of the Cathedral at Cloisterham, is really too suspicious. No intelligent British jury, seeing the facts as they are presented to us, the readers, could for a moment think of acquitting him of the murder of his nephew, Edwin Drood. Take those facts seriatim. First, we have the motive: he is passionately in love with the girl to whom his nephew is engaged. Then we have a terrible coil of compromising circumstances: his extravagant profession of devotion to his nephew, his attempts to establish a hidden influence over the girl's mind to his nephew's detriment and his own advantage, his gropings amid the dark recesses of the Cathedral and inquiries into the action of quicklime, his endeavours to foment a quarrel between Edwin Drood and a fiery young gentleman from Ceylon, on the night of the murder, and his undoubted doctoring of the latter's drink. Then, after the murder, how damaging is his conduct. He falls into a kind of fit on discovering that his nephew's engagement had been broken off, which he might well do if his crime turned out to be not only a crime but also a blunder. And his conduct to the girl is, to say the least of it, strange. Nor will his character help him. He frequents the opium dens of the East-end of London. Guilty, guilty, most certainly guilty. There is nothing to be said in arrest of judgment. Let the judge put on the black cap, and Jasper be devoted to his merited doom.

Such was the story that Dickens was unravelling in the spring and early summer of 1870. And fortune smiled upon it. He had sold the copyright for the large sum of £7,500, and a half share of the profits after a sale of twenty-five thousand copies, plus £1,000 for the advance

sheets sent to America; and the sale was more than answering his expectations. Nor did prosperity look favourably on the book alone. It also, in one sense, showered benefits on the author. He was worth, as the evidence of the Probate Court was to show only too soon, a sum of over £80,000. He was happy in his children. He was universally loved, honoured, courted. "Troops of friends," though alas! death had made havoc among the oldest, were still his. Never had man exhibited less inclination to pay fawning court to greatness and social rank. Yet when the Queen expressed a desire to see him, as she did in March, 1870, he felt not only pride, but a gentleman's pleasure in acceding to her wish, and came away charmed from a long chatting interview. But, while prosperity was smiling thus, the shadows of his day of life were lengthening, lengthening, and the night was at hand.

On Wednesday, June 8th, he seemed in excellent spirits; worked all the morning in the chalet* as was his wont, returned to the house for lunch and a cigar, and then, being anxious to get on with "Edwin Drood," went back to his desk once more. The weather was superb. All round the landscape lay in fullest beauty of leafage and flower, and the air rang musically with the song of birds. What were his thoughts that summer day as he sat there at his work? Writing many years before, he had asked whether the "subtle liquor of the blood" may not "perceive, by properties within itself," when danger is imminent, and so "run cold and dull"? Did any such monitor within, one wonders, warn him at all that the hand of death was uplifted to strike, and that its shadow lay upon him? Judging from the words that fell from his pen that day we might almost think that it was so—we might almost go further, and guess with what hopes and fears he looked into the darkness beyond. Never at any time does he appear to have been greatly troubled by speculative doubt. There is no evidence in his life, no evidence in his letters, no evidence in his books, that he had ever seen any cause to question the truth of the reply which Christianity gives to the world-old problems of

* The chalet, since sold and removed, stood at the edge of a kind of "wilderness," which is separated from Gadshill Place by the highroad.

man's origin and destiny. For abstract speculation he had not the slighest turn or taste. In no single one of his characters does he exhibit any fierce mental struggle as between truth and error. All that side of human experience, with its anguish of battle, its despairs, and its triumphs, seems to have been unknown to him. Perhaps he had the stronger grasp of other matters in consequence —who knows? But the fact remains. With a trust quite simple and untroubled, he held through life to the faith of Christ. When his children were little, he had written prayers for them, had put the Bible into simpler language for their use. In his will, dated May 12, 1869, he had said, "I commit my soul to the mercy of God through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and I exhort my dear children humbly to try to guide themselves by the broad teaching of the New Testament in its broad spirit, and to put no faith in any man's narrow construction of its letter here or there." And now, on this last day of his life, in probably the last letter that left his pen, he wrote to one who had objected to some passage in "Edwin Drood" as irreverent: "I have always striven in my writings to express veneration for the life and lessons of our Saviour—because I feel it." And with a significance, of which, as I have said, he may himself have been dimly half-conscious, among the last words of his unfinished story, written that very afternoon, are words that tell of glorious summer sunshine transfiguring the city of his imagination, and of the changing lights, and the song of birds, and the incense from garden and meadow that "penetrate into the Cathedral" of Cloisterham, "subdue its earthy odour, and preach the Resurrection and the Life."

For now the end had come. When he went in to dinner Miss Hogarth noticed that he looked very ill, and wished at once to send for a doctor. But he refused, struggled for a short space against the impending fit, and tried to talk, at last very incoherently. Then, when urged to go up to his bed, he rose, and, almost immediately, slid from her supporting arm, and fell on the floor. Nor did consciousness return. He passed from the unrest of life into the peace of eternity on the following day, June 9, 1870, at ten minutes past six in the evening.

And now he lies in Westminster Abbey, among the men who have most helped, by deed or thought, to make this

England of ours what it is. Dean Stanley only gave effect to the national voice when he assigned to him that place of sepulture. The most popular, and in most respects the greatest novelist of his time; the lord over the laughter and tears of a whole generation; the writer, in his own field of fiction, whose like we shall probably not see again for many a long, long year, if ever; where could he be laid more fittingly for his last long sleep than in the hallowed resting-place which the country sets apart for the most honoured of her children?

So he lies there among his peers in the Southern Transept. Close beside him sleep Dr. Johnson, the puissant literary autocrat of his own time; and Garrick, who was that time's greatest actor; and Handel, who may fittingly claim to have been one of the mightiest musicians of all time. There sleeps, too, after the fitful fever of his troubled life, the witty, the eloquent Sheridan. In close proximity rests Macaulay, the artist-historian and essayist. Within the radius of a few yards lies all that will ever die of Chaucer, who five hundred years ago sounded the spring note of English literature, and gave to all after-time the best, brightest glimpse into mediæval England; and all that is mortal also of Spenser of the honey'd verse; and of Beaumont, who had caught an echo of Shakespeare's sweetness if not his power; and of sturdy Ben Jonson, held in his own day a not unworthy rival of Shakespeare's self; and of "glorious" and most masculine John Dryden. From his monument Shakespeare looks upon the place with his kindly eyes, and Addison, too, and Goldsmith; and one can almost imagine a smile of fellowship upon the marble faces of those later dead—Burns, Coleridge, Southey, and Thackeray.

And of the future what shall we say? His fame had a brilliant day while he lived; it has a brilliant day now. Will it fade into twilight, without even an afterglow; will it pass altogether into the night of oblivion? I cannot think so. The vitality of Dickens's works is singularly great. They are all athrob, as it were, with hot human blood. They are popular in the highest sense because their appeal is universal, to the uneducated as well as the educated. The humour is superb, and most of it, so far as one can judge, of no ephemeral kind. The pathos is more questionable, but that, too, at its simplest and best,

and especially when the humour is shot with it—is worthy of a better epithet than excellent. It is supremely touching. Imagination, fancy, wit, eloquence, the keenest observation, the most strenuous endeavour to reach the highest artistic excellence, the largest kindliness—all these he brought to his life-work. And that work, as I think, will live, I had almost dared to prophesy for ever. Of course fashions change. Of course no writer of fiction, writing for his own little day, can permanently meet the needs of all after times. Some loss of immediate vital interest is inevitable. Nevertheless, in Dickens's case, all will not die. Half a century, a century hence, he will still be read; not perhaps as he was read when his words flashed upon the world in their first glory and freshness, nor as he is read now in the noon of his fame. But he will be read much more than we read the novelists of the eighteenth century—be read as much, shall I say, as we still read Scott. And so long as he *is* read, there will be one gentle and humanising influence the more at work among men.

THE LIFE OF CHARLES DICKENS.

BY

JOHN FORSTER.*

I.

"I KNOW [wrote Charles Dickens concerning his boyhood experiences] I do not exaggerate, unconsciously and unintentionally, the scantiness of my resources and the difficulties of my life. I know that if a shilling or so were given me by any one, I spent it in a dinner or a tea. I know that I worked, from morning to night, with common men and boys, a shabby child. I know that I tried, but ineffectually, not to anticipate my money, and to make it last the week through; by putting it away in a drawer I had in the counting-house, wrapped into six little parcels, each parcel containing the same amount, and labelled with a different day. I know that I have lounged about the streets, insufficiently and unsatisfactorily fed. I know that, but for the mercy of God, I might easily have been, for any care that was taken of me, a little robber or a little vagabond."

What at once he brought out of the humiliation that had impressed him so deeply, though scarcely as yet quite

* In making these extracts from Forster's voluminous biography, upon whose abundant materials later biographers of Dickens have freely drawn, the aim has been to select passages interesting and important in themselves, and such as fittingly supplement the "Life" by Marzials. While these passages do not, in the nature of the case, form a continuous narrative, they yet do, in the main, follow the chronological order of Forster's work.—ED.

consciously, was a natural dread of the hardships that might still be in store for him, sharpened by what he had gone through; and this became by degrees a passionate resolve, even while he was yielding to circumstances, *not to be* what circumstances were conspiring to make him. All that was involved in what he had suffered and sunk into, could not have been known to him at the time; but it was plain enough later; and in conversation with me after the revelation was made, he used to find, at extreme points in his life, the explanation of himself in those early trials. He had derived great good from them, but not without alloy. The fixed and eager determination, the restless and resistless energy, which opened to him opportunities of escape from many mean environments, not by turning off from any path of duty, but by resolutely rising to such excellence or distinction as might be attainable in it, brought with it some disadvantage among many noble advantages. Of this he was himself aware, but not to the full extent. What it was that in society made him often uneasy, shrinking, and over-sensitive, he knew; but all the danger he ran in bearing down and overmastering the feeling, he did not know. A too great confidence in himself, a sense that everything was possible to the will that would make it so, laid occasionally upon him self-imposed burdens greater than might be borne by any one with safety. In that direction there was in him, at such times, something even hard and aggressive; in his determinations a something that had almost the tone of fierceness; something in his nature that made his resolves insuperable, however hasty the opinions on which they had been formed. So rare were these manifestations, however, and so little did they prejudice a character as entirely open and generous as it was at all times ardent and impetuous, that only very infrequently, towards the close of the middle term of a friendship which lasted without the interruption of a day for more than three-and-thirty years, were they ever unfavourably presented to me. But there they were; and when I have seen strangely present, at such chance intervals, a stern and even cold isolation of self-reliance side by side with a susceptivity almost feminine and the most eager craving for sympathy, it has seemed to me as though his habitual impulses for everything kind and gentle had sunk, for the time, under a

sudden hard and inexorable sense of what fate had dealt to him in those early years. On more than one occasion indeed I had confirmation of this. "I must entreat you," he wrote to me in June, 1862, "to pause for an instant, and go back to what you know of my childish days, and to ask yourself whether it is natural that something of the character formed in me then, and lost under happier circumstances, should have reappeared in the last five years. The never-to-be-forgotten misery of that old time bred a certain shrinking sensitiveness in a certain ill-clad, ill-fed child, that I have found come back in the never-to-be-forgotten misery of this later time."

One good there was, however, altogether without drawback. The story of his childish misery has itself sufficiently shown that he never throughout it lost his precious gift of animal spirits, or his native capacity for humorous enjoyment; and there were positive gains to him from what he underwent, which were also rich and lasting. With the very poor and unprosperous, out of whose sufferings and strugglings, and the virtues as well as vices born of them, his not least splendid successes were wrought, his childish experiences had made him actually one. They were not his clients whose cause he pleaded with such pathos and humour, and on whose side he got the laughter and tears of all the world, but in some sort his very self. Nor was it a small part of this manifest advantage that he should have obtained his experience as a child and not as a man; that only the good part, the flower and fruit of it, was plucked by him; and that nothing of the evil part, none of the earth in which the seed was planted, remained to soil him.

II.

"My recollection of Dickens whilst at school* [says Mr. Owen P. Thomas] is that of a healthy looking boy, small but well built, with a more than usual flow of spirits, inducing to harmless fun, seldom or ever I think to mischief, to which so many lads at that age are prone. I

* Wellington House Academy, kept by Mr. Jones.—Ed.

cannot recall anything that then indicated he would hereafter become a literary celebrity; but perhaps he was too young then. He usually held his head more erect than lads ordinarily do, and there was a general smartness about him. His week-day dress of jacket and trousers, I can clearly remember, was what is called pepper-and-salt; and instead of the frill that most boys of his age wore then, he had a turn-down collar, so that he looked less youthful in consequence. He invented what we termed a 'lingo,' produced by the addition of a few letters of the same sound to every word; and it was our ambition, walking and talking thus along the street, to be considered foreigners. As an alternate amusement the present writer well remembers extemporising tales of some sort, and reciting them offhand, with Dickens and Danson or Tobin walking on either side of him."

"Dickens [writes another schoolfellow, Dr. Henry Danson] has given a very lively account of this place in his paper entitled 'Our School,' but it is very mythical in many respects, and more especially in the compliment he pays in it to himself. I do not remember that Dickens distinguished himself in any way, or carried off any prizes. My belief is that he did not learn Greek or Latin there, and you will remember there is no allusion to the classics in any of his writings. He was a handsome, curly-headed lad, full of animation and animal spirits, and probably was connected with every mischievous prank in the school. I do not think he came in for any of Mr. Jones's scourging propensity: in fact, together with myself, he was only a day-pupil, and with these there was a wholesome fear of tales being carried home to the parents. His personal appearance at that time is vividly brought home to me in the portrait of him taken a few years later by Mr. Lawrence. He resided with his friends, in a very small house in a street leading out of Seymour Street, north of Mr. Judkin's chapel. Depend on it he was quite a self-made man, and his wonderful knowledge and command of the English language must have been acquired by long and patient study after leaving his last school.

"Penny and Saturday magazines were published weekly, and were greedily read by us. We kept bees, white mice, and other living things clandestinely in our desks; and the mechanical arts were a good deal cultivated, in the

shape of coach-building, and making pumps and boats, the motive power of which was the white mice.

"I think at that time Dickens took to writing small tales, and we had a sort of club for lending and circulating them. We were very strong, too, in theatricals. We mounted small theatres, and got up very gorgeous scenery to illustrate 'The Miller and his Men' and 'Cherry and Fair Star.' Dickens was always a leader at these plays, which were occasionally presented with much solemnity before an audience of boys, and in the presence of the ushers. My brother, assisted by Dickens, got up 'The Miller and his Men' in a very gorgeous form. Master Beverley constructed the mill for us in such a way that it could tumble to pieces with the assistance of crackers. At one representation the fireworks in the last scene, ending with the destruction of the mill, were so very real that the police interfered, and knocked violently at the doors. Dickens's after taste for theatricals might have had its origin in these small affairs."

III.

Dickens had not quitted school many months before his father had made sufficient interest with an attorney of Gray's Inn, Mr. Edward Blackmore, to obtain him regular employment in his office. In this capacity of clerk, our only trustworthy glimpse of him we owe to the last-named gentleman, who has described briefly, and I do not doubt authentically, the services so rendered by him to the law. It cannot be said that they were noteworthy, though it might be difficult to find a more distinguished person who has borne the title, unless we make exception for the very father of literature himself, whom Chaucer, with amusing illustration of the way in which words change their meanings, calls "that conceited clerke Homère."

"I was well acquainted," writes Mr. Edward Blackmore of Alresford, "with his parents, and, being then in practice in Gray's Inn, they asked me if I could find employment for him. He was a bright, clever-looking youth, and I took him as a clerk. He came to me in May, 1827, and left in November, 1828; and I have now

an account-book which he used to keep of petty disbursements in the office, in which he charged himself with the modest salary first of thirteen shillings and sixpence, and afterwards of fifteen shillings a week. Several incidents took place in the office of which he must have been a keen observer, as I recognised some of them in his 'Pickwick' and 'Nickleby'; and I am much mistaken if some of his characters had not their originals in persons I well remember. His taste for theatricals was much promoted by a fellow-clerk named Potter, with whom he chiefly associated. They took every opportunity, then unknown to me, of going together to a minor theatre, where (I afterwards heard) they not unfrequently engaged in parts. After he left me I saw him at times in the lord chancellor's court, taking notes of cases as a reporter. I then lost sight of him until his 'Pickwick' made its appearance." This letter indicates the position he held at Mr. Blackmore's; and we have but to turn to the passage in "Pickwick" which describes the several grades of attorney's-clerk, to understand it more clearly. He was very far below the articled clerk, who has paid a premium and is attorney in perspective. He was not so high as the salaried clerk, with nearly the whole of his weekly thirty shillings spent on his personal pleasures. He was not even on a level with the middle-aged copying clerk, always needy and uniformly shabby. He was simply among, however his own nature may have lifted him above, the "office-lads in their first surtouts, who feel a befitting contempt for boys at day-schools, club as they go home at night for saveloys and porter, and think there's nothing like life." Thus far, not more or less, had he now reached. He was one of the office-lads, and probably in his first surtout.

But, even thus, the process of education went on, defying what seemed to interrupt it; and in the amount of his present equipment for his needs of life, what he brought from the Wellington House Academy can have borne but the smallest proportion to his acquirement at Mr. Blackmore's. Yet to seek to identify, without help from himself, any passages in his books with those boyish law-experiences, would be idle and hopeless enough. In the earliest of his writings, and down to the very latest, he worked exhaustively the field which is opened by an

attorney's office to a student of life and manners; but we have not now to deal with his numerous varieties of the genus clerk drawn thus for the amusement of others, but with the acquisitions which at present he was storing up for himself from the opportunities such offices opened to him. Nor would it be possible to have better illustrative comment on all these years, than is furnished by his father's reply to a friend it was now hoped to interest on his behalf, which more than once I have heard him whimsically but good-humouredly imitate: "Pray, Mr. Dickens, where was your son educated?" "Why, indeed, Sir—ha! ha!—he may be said to have educated himself!" Of the two kinds of education which Gibbon says that all men who rise above the common level receive, the first that of his teachers, and the second—more personal and more important—*his own*, he had the advantage only of the last. It nevertheless sufficed for him.

No man who knew him in later years, and talked to him familiarly of books and things, would have suspected his education in boyhood, almost entirely self-acquired as it was, to have been so rambling or haphazard as I have here described it. The secret consisted in this, that, whatever for the time he had to do, he lifted himself, there and then, to the level of and at no time disregarded the rules that guided the hero of his novel: "Whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with all my heart to do well. What I have devoted myself to, I have devoted myself to completely. Never to put one hand to anything on which I could throw my whole self, and never to affect depreciation of my work, whatever it was, I find now to have been my golden rules."

Of the difficulties that beset his shorthand studies, as well as of what first turned his mind to them, he has told also something in "Copperfield." . . . What it was that made it not quite heart-breaking to the hero of the fiction, its readers know; and something of the same kind was now to enter into the actual experience of its writer. First let me say, however, that after subduing to his wants in marvellously quick time this unruly and unaccommodating servant of stenography, what he most desired was still not open to him. "There never *was* such a shorthand writer," has been often said to me by Mr. Beard, the friend he first made in that line when he entered the

gallery, and with whom to the close of his life he maintained the friendliest intercourse. But there was no opening for him in the gallery yet. He had to pass nearly two years as a reporter for one of the offices in Doctors' Commons, having made attempt even in the direction of the stage to escape such drudgery, before he became a sharer in parliamentary toils and triumphs; and what sustained his young hero through something of the same sort of trial, was also his own support.

IV.

His attempt to get upon the stage dates immediately before [his] newspaper engagements. His Doctors' Commons reportership was a living so wearily uncertain, that a possibility of the other calling had occurred to him in quite a business-like way. He went to theatres almost every night for a long time; studied and practised himself in parts; was so much attracted by the "At Homes" of the elder Mathews, that he resolved to make his first plunge in a similar direction; and finally wrote to make offer of himself to Covent Garden. "I wrote to Bartley, who was stage-manager, and told him how young I was, and exactly what I thought I could do; and that I believed I had a strong perception of character and oddity, and a natural power of reproducing in my own person what I observed in others. This was at the time when I was at Doctors' Commons as a shorthand writer for the proctors. And I recollect I wrote the letter from a little office I had there, where the answer came also. There must have been something in my letter that struck the authorities, for Bartley wrote to me almost immediately to say that they were busy getting up the Hunchback (so they were), but that they would communicate with me again, in a fortnight. Punctual to the time another letter came, with an appointment to do anything of Mathew's I pleased, before him and Charles Kemble, on a certain day at the theatre. My sister Fanny was in the secret, and was to go with me to play the songs. I was laid up when the day came, with a terrible bad cold and an inflammation of the face; the beginning, by the by, of that

annoyance in one ear to which I am subject to this day. I wrote to say so, and added that I would resume my application next season. I made a great splash in the gallery soon afterwards; the 'Chronicle' opened to me; I had a distinction in the little world of the newspaper, which made one like it; began to write; didn't want money; had never thought of the stage but as a means of getting it; gradually left off turning my thoughts that way, and never resumed the idea."

The beginning to write was a thing far more momentous to him (though then he did not know it) than his "great splash" in the gallery. In the December number for 1833 of what then was called the "Old Monthly Magazine," his first published piece of writing had seen the light. Nine others enlivened the pages of later numbers of the same magazine, the last in February, 1835, that which appeared in the preceding August having first had the signature of Boz. This was the nickname of a pet child, his youngest brother Augustus, whom in honour of "The Vicar of Wakefield" he had dubbed Moses, which being facetiously pronounced through the nose became Boses, and being shortened became Boz. "Boz was a very familiar household word to me, long before I was an author, and so I came to adopt it." Thus had he fully invented his sketches by Boz before they were even so called, or any one was ready to give much attention to them.

The "Sketches" were much more talked about than the first two or three numbers of "Pickwick," and I remember still with what hearty praise the book was first named to me by my dear friend Albany Fonblanque, as keen and clear a judge as ever lived either of books or men. Richly did it merit all the praise it had, and more, I will add, than he was ever disposed to give to it himself. He decidedly underrated it. He gave, in subsequent writings, so much more perfect form and fullness to everything it contained, that he did not care to credit himself with the marvel of having yet so early anticipated so much. But the first sprightly runnings of his genius are undoubtedly here. Mr. Bumble is in the parish sketches, and Mr. Dawkins the dodger in the Old Bailey scenes. There is laughter and fun to excess, never mis-

applied; there are the minute points and shades of character, with all the discrimination and nicety of detail, afterwards so famous; there is everywhere the most perfect ease and skill of handling. The observation shown throughout is nothing short of wonderful. Things are painted literally as they are; and, whatever the picture, whether of every-day vulgar, shabby-genteel, or downright low, with neither the condescending air which is affectation, nor the too familiar one which is slang. The book altogether is a perfectly unaffected, unpretentious, honest performance. Under its manly, sensible, straightforward vein of talk, there is running at the same time a natural flow of sentiment never sentimental, of humour always easy and unforced, and of pathos for the most part dramatic or picturesque, under which lay the germ of what his mature genius took afterwards most delight in.

The Session of 1836 terminated his connection with the gallery, and some fruits of his increased leisure showed themselves before the close of the year. His eldest sister's musical attainments and connections had introduced him to many cultivators and professors of that art; he was led to take much interest in Mr. Braham's enterprise at the St. James's Theatre; and in aid of it he wrote a farce for Mr. Harley, founded upon one of his sketches, and the story and songs for an opera composed by his friend Mr. Hullah. Both "The Strange Gentleman," acted in September, and "The Village Coquettes," produced in December, 1836, had a good success; and the last is memorable to me for having brought me first into personal communication with Dickens.

The first letter I had from him was at the close of 1836 from Furnival's Inn, when he sent me the book of his opera of "The Village Coquettes"; and this was followed, two months later, by his collected "Sketches," both first and second series; which he desired me to receive "as a very small testimony of the donor's regard and obligations, as well as of his desire to cultivate and avail himself of a friendship which has been so pleasantly thrown in his way. . . . In short, if you will receive them for my sake and not for their own, you will very greatly oblige me." I had met him in the interval at the house of our

common friend Mr. Ainsworth, and I remember vividly the impression then made upon me.

Very different was his face in those days from that which photography has made familiar to the present generation. A look of youthfulness first attracted you, and then a candour and openness of expression which made you sure of the qualities within. The features were very good. He had a capital forehead, a firm nose with full wide nostril, eyes wonderfully beaming with intellect and running over with humour and cheerfulness, and a rather prominent mouth strongly marked with sensibility. The head was altogether well formed and symmetrical, and the air and carriage of it were extremely spirited. The hair so scant and grizzled in later days was then of a rich brown and most luxuriant abundance, and the bearded face of his last two decades had hardly a vestige of hair or whisker; but there was that in the face as I first recollect it which no time could change, and which remained implanted on it unalterably to the last. This was the quickness, keenness, and practical power, the eager, restless, energetic outlook on each several feature, that seemed to tell so little of a student or writer of books, and so much of a man of action and business in the world. Light and motion flashed from every part of it. *It was as if made of steel*, was said of it, four or five years after the time to which I am referring, by a most original and delicate observer, the late Mrs. Carlyle. "What a face is his to meet in a drawing-room!" wrote Leigh Hunt to me, the morning after I made them known to each other. "It has the life and soul in it of fifty human beings." In such sayings are expressed not alone the restless and resistless vivacity and force of which I have spoken, but that also which lay beneath them of steadiness and hard endurance.

Dickens was very fond of riding in these early years, and there was no recreation he so much indulged, or with such profit to himself, in the intervals of his hardest work. I was his companion oftener than I could well afford the time for, the distances being great and nothing else to be done for the day; but when a note would unexpectedly arrive while I knew him to be hunted hard by one of his printers, telling me he had been sticking to work so closely

that he must have rest, and, by way of getting it, proposing we should start together that morning at eleven o'clock for "a fifteen-mile ride out, ditto in, and a lunch on the road" with a wind-up of six o'clock dinner in Doughty Street, I could not resist the good-fellowship. His notion of finding rest from mental exertion in as much bodily exertion of equal severity, continued with him to the last; taking in the later years what I always thought the too great strain of as many miles in walking as he now took in the saddle, and too often indulging it at night: for, though he was always passionately fond of walking, he observed as yet a moderation in it, even accepting as sufficient my seven or eight miles' companionship. "What a brilliant morning for a country walk!" he would write, with not another word in his dispatch. Or, "Is it possible that you can't, oughtn't, shouldn't, mustn't, *won't* be tempted, this gorgeous day!" Or, "I start precisely—precisely, mind—at half-past one. Come come, *come*, and walk in the green lanes. You will work the better for it all the week. COME! I shall expect you." Or, "You don't feel disposed, do you, to muffle yourself up, and start off with me for a good brisk walk over Hampstead Heath? I knows a good 'ous there where we can have a red-hot chop for dinner, and a glass of good wine": which led to our first experience of Jack Straw's Castle, memorable for many happy meetings in coming years. But the rides were most popular and frequent. "I think," he would write, "Richmond and Twickenham, thro' the park, out at Knightsbridge, and over Barnes Common—would make a beautiful ride." Or, "Do you know, I shouldn't object to an early chop at some village inn?" Or, "Not knowing whether my head was off or on, it became so addled with work, I have gone riding the old road, and should be truly delighted to meet or be overtaken by you." Or, "Where shall it be—*oh where*—Hampstead, Greenwich, Windsor? WHERE? ? ? ? ? ? while the day is bright, not when it has dwindled away to nothing! For who can be of any use whatsomdever such a day as this, excepting out of doors?" Or it might be interrogatory summons to "A hard trot of three hours?" or intimation as laconic: "To be heard of at Eel-pie House, Twickenham!"

V.

He had taken his wife abroad for a ten days' summer holiday, accompanied by the shrewd observant young artist, Mr. Hablot Browne, whose admirable illustrations to "Pickwick" had more than supplied Mr. Seymour's loss; and I had a letter from him on their landing at Calais on the 2nd of July [1837]. "We have arranged for a post-coach to take us to Ghent, Brussels, Antwerp, and a hundred other places, that I cannot recollect now and couldn't spell if I did. We went this afternoon in a barouche to some gardens where the people dance, and where they were footing it most heartily—especially the women, who in their short petticoats and light caps look uncommonly agreeable. A gentleman in a blue surtout and silken berlins accompanied us from the hotel, and acted as curator. He even waltzed with a very smart lady (just to show us, condescendingly, how it ought to be done), and waltzed elegantly too. We rang for slippers after we came back, and it turned out that this gentleman was the Boots."

Writing on the 3rd of September [1837], he reports himself just risen from an attack of illness. "I am much better, and hope to begin 'Pickwick' No. 18 to-morrow. You will imagine how queer I must have been when I tell you that I have been compelled for four-and-twenty mortal hours to abstain from porter or other malt liquor!!! I done it though—really. . . . I have discovered that the landlord of the Albion has delicious hollands (but what is that to *you*, for you cannot sympathise with my feelings), and that a cobbler who lives opposite to my bed-room window is a Roman Catholic, and gives an hour and a half to his devotions every morning behind his counter. I have walked upon the sands at low-water from this place to Ramsgate, and sat upon the same at high-ditto till I have been flayed with the cold. I have seen ladies and gentlemen walking upon the earth in slippers of buff, and pickling themselves in the sea in complete suits of the same. I have seen stout gentlemen looking at nothing through powerful telescopes for hours, and, when at last they saw a cloud of smoke, fancying a

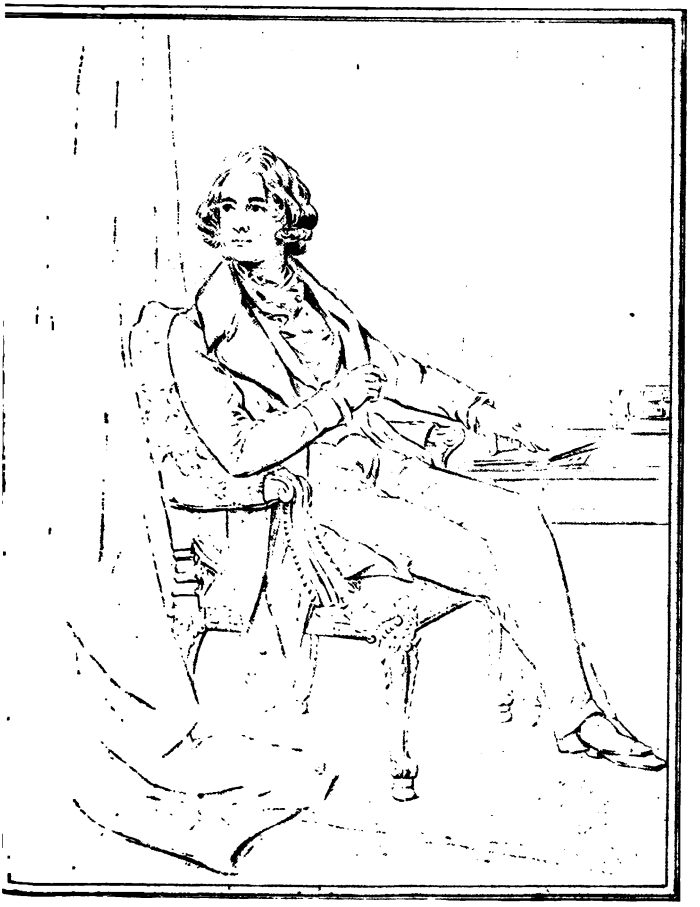
steamer behind it, and going home comfortable and happy. I have found out that our next neighbour has a wife and something else under the same roof with the rest of his furniture—the wife deaf and blind, and the something else given to drinking. And if you ever get to the end of this letter *you* will find out that I subscribe myself on paper as on everything else (some atonement perhaps for its length and absurdity)," etc., etc.

Of the progress of his "Oliver," and his habits of writing at the time, it may perhaps be worth giving some additional glimpses from his letters of 1838. "I was thinking about 'Oliver' till dinner time yesterday," he wrote on the 9th of March, "and, just as I had fallen upon him tooth and nail, was called away to sit with Kate. I did eight slips, however, and hope to make them fifteen this morning." Three days before, a daughter had been born to him, on which occasion we rode out fifteen miles on the Great North Road, and, after dining at the Red Lion in Barnet on our way home, distinguished the already memorable day by bringing in both hacks dead lame.

On that day week, Monday the 13th, after describing himself "sitting patiently at home waiting for 'Oliver Twist,' who has not yet arrived," which was his agreeable form of saying that his fancy had fallen into sluggishness that morning, he made remark in as pleasant phrase on some piece of painful news I had sent him, now forgotten: "I have not yet seen the paper, and you throw me into a fever. The comfort is, that all the strange and terrible things come uppermost, and that the good and pleasant things are mixed up with every moment of our existence so plentifully that we scarcely heed them."

VI.

I will add a couple of extracts from his letters while in Exeter arranging his father's and mother's new home. "I took a little house for them this morning" (5th March, 1839, from the New London Inn), "and if they ·e not pleased with it I shall be grievously disappointed.



Maclise, R. A. C. H. Jeens.

CHARLES DICKENS.

Outline of the painting by Maclise (1839).

Exactly a mile beyond the city on the Plymouth road there are two white cottages: one is theirs and the other belongs to their landlady. I almost forget the number of rooms; but there is an excellent parlour with two other rooms on the ground floor, there is really a beautiful little room over the parlour which I am furnishing as a drawing-room, and there is a splendid garden. The paint and paper throughout is new and fresh and cheerful-looking, the place is clean beyond all description, and the neighbourhood I suppose the most beautiful in this most beautiful of English counties [Devonshire]. Of the landlady, a widow with whom I had the honour of taking lunch to-day, I must make most especial mention. She is a fat, infirm, splendidly-fresh-faced country dame, rising sixty and recovering from an attack 'on the nerves'—I thought they never went off the stones, but I find they try country air with the best of us. In the event of my mother's being ill at any time, I really think the vicinity of this good dame, the very picture of respectability and good humour, will be the greatest possible comfort. *Her* furniture and domestic arrangements are a capital picture, but that I reserve till I see you, when I anticipate a hearty laugh. She bears the highest character with the bankers and the clergyman (who formerly lived in *my* cottage himself), and is a kind-hearted worthy capital specimen of the sort of life, or I have no eye for the real and no idea of finding it out.

"This good lady's brother and his wife live in the next nearest cottage, and the brother transacts the good lady's business, the nerves not admitting of her transacting it herself, although they leave her in her debilitated state something sharper than the finest lancet. Now the brother, having coughed all night till he coughed himself into such a perspiration that you might have 'wringed his hair,' according to the asseveration of eye-witnesses, his wife was sent for to negociate with me; and if you could have seen me sitting in the kitchen with the two old women, endeavouring to make them comprehend that I had no evil intentions or covert designs, and that I had come down all that way to take some cottage and had *happened* to walk down that road and see that particular one, you would never have forgotten it. Then, to see the servant girl run backwards and forwards to the sick man,

and when the sick man had signed one agreement whi
I drew up and the old woman instantly put away in a di
used tea-caddy, to see the trouble and the number
messages it took before the sick man could be brought
sign another (a duplicate) that we might have one apiec
was one of the richest scraps of genuine drollery I ev
saw in all my days. How, when the business was ove
we became conversational; how I was facetious, and
the same time virtuous and domestic; how I drank toas
in the beer, and stated on interrogatory that I was
married man and the father of two blessed infants; ho
the ladies marvelled thereat; how one of the ladies, havi
been in London, enquired where I lived, and, being tol
remembered that Doughty Street and the Foundlin
Hospital were in the Old Kent Road, which I didn't co
tradict—all this and a great deal more must make
laugh when I return, as it makes me laugh now to thin
of. Of my subsequent visit to the upholsterer recon
mended by the landlady; of the absence of the upholsterer
wife, and the timidity of the upholsterer fearful of actin
in her absence; of my sitting behind a high desk in
little dark shop, calling over the articles in requisition an
checking off the prices as the upholsterer exhibited th
goods and called them out; of my coming over th
upholsterer's daughter with many virtuous endearment
to propitiate the establishment and reduce the bill; o
these matters I say nothing, either, for the same reaso
as that just mentioned. The discovery of the cottage
seriously regard as a blessing (not to speak it profanely
upon our efforts in this cause. I had heard nothing fro
the bank, and walked straight there, by some strange im
pulse, directly after breakfast. I am sure they may b
happy there; for if I were older, and my course of activit
were run, I am sure *I* could, with God's blessing, fo
many and many a year."

VII.

["The Old Curiosity Shop," published in 1840,] wa
an extraordinary success, and, in America more especially
very greatly increased the writer's fame. . . . Of the in
numerable tributes the story has received, there is on

which has much affected me. Not many months before my friend's death, he had sent me two "Overland Monthlies" containing two sketches by a young American writer far away in California, "The Luck of Roaring Camp," and "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," in which he had found such subtle strokes of character as he had not anywhere else in late years discovered; the manner resembling himself, but the matter fresh to a degree that had surprised him; the painting in all respects masterly; and the wild rude thing painted, a quite wonderful reality. I have rarely known him more honestly moved. A few months passed; telegraph wires flashed over the world that he had passed away on the 9th of June [1870]; and the young writer * of whom he had then written to me, all unconscious of that praise, put his tribute of gratefulness and sorrow into the form of a poem called "Dickens in Camp" [July, 1870]. It embodies the same kind of incident which had so affected the "Master" himself, in the papers to which I have referred; it shows the gentler influences which, in even those Californian wilds, can restore outlawed "roaring camps" to silence and humanity; and there is hardly any form of posthumous tribute which I can imagine likely to have better satisfied his desire of fame, than one which should thus connect with the special favourite among all his heroines, the restraints and authority exerted by his genius over the rudest and least civilised of competitors in that far fierce race for wealth.

Above the pines the moon was slowly drifting,
  The river sang below;
The dim Sierras, far beyond, uplifting
  Their minarets of snow:

The roaring camp-fire, with rude humour, painted
  The ruddy tints of health
On haggard face and form that drooped and fainted
  In the fierce race for wealth;

Till one arose, and from his pack's scant treasure
  A hoarded volume drew,
And cards were dropped from hands of listless leisure
  To hear the tale anew;

* Francis Bret Harte.—Ed.

And then, while round them shadows gathered faster,
  And as the fire-light fell,
He read aloud the book wherein the Master
  Had writ of "Little Nell":

Perhaps 'twas boyish fancy—for the reader
  Was youngest of them all—
But, as he read, from clustering pine and cedar
  A silence seemed to fall;

The fir-trees, gathering closer in the shadows,
  Listened in every spray,
While the whole camp, with "Nell," on English meadows
  Wandered and lost their way:

And so in mountain solitudes—o'ertaken
  As by some spell divine—
Their cares dropped from them like the needles shaken
  From out the gusty pine.

Lost is that camp, and wasted all its fire;
  And he who wrought that spell?—
Ah, towering pine and stately Kentish spire,
  Ye have one tale to tell!

Lost is that camp! but let its fragrant story
  Blend with the breath that thrills
With hop-vines' incense all the pensive glory
  That fills the Kentish hills.

And on that grave where English oak and holly
  And laurel wreaths entwine,
Deem it not all a too presumptuous folly—
  This spray of Western pine!

VIII.

His first letter from Edinburgh, where he and Mrs. Dickens had taken up quarters at the Royal Hotel on their arrival the previous night, is dated the 23rd of June [1841], "I have been this morning to the Parliament House, and am now introduced (I hope) to everybody in Edinburgh. The hotel is perfectly besieged, and I have been forced to take refuge in a sequestered apartment at the end of a long passage, wherein I write this letter. They talk of 300 at the dinner." * This was his first

* A public dinner given to Dickens on his first visit to Scotland—25th of June.—Ed.

practical experience of the honours his fame had won for him, and it found him as eager to receive as all were eager to give. Very interesting still, too, are those who took leading part in the celebration; and, in his pleasant sketches of them, there are some once famous and familiar figures not so well known to the present generation. Here, among the first, are Wilson * and Robertson.

"The renowned Peter [afterwards Lord] Robertson is a large, portly, full-faced man with a merry eye, and a queer way of looking under his spectacles which is characteristic and pleasant. He seems a very warm-hearted earnest man too, and I felt quite at home with him forthwith. Walking up and down the hall of the courts of law (which was full of advocates, writers to the signet, clerks, and idlers) was a tall, burly, handsome man of eight-and-fifty, with a gait like O'Connell's, the bluest eye you can imagine, and long hair—longer than mine—falling down in a wild way under the broad brim of his hat. He had on a surtout coat, a blue checked shirt; the collar standing up, and kept in its place with a wisp of black neckerchief; no waistcoat; and a large pocket-handkerchief thrust into his breast, which was all broad and open. At his heels followed a wiry, sharp-eyed, shaggy devil of a terrier, dogging his steps as he went slashing up and down, now with one man beside him, now with another, and now quite alone, but always at a fast, rolling pace, with his head in the air, and his eyes as wide open as he could get them. I guessed it was Wilson, and it was. A bright, clear-complexioned, mountain-looking fellow, he looks as though he had just come down from the Highlands, and had never in his life taken pen in hand. But he has had an attack of paralysis in his right arm, within this month. He winced when I shook hands with him; and once or twice, when we were walking up and down, slipped as if he had stumbled on a piece of orange-peel. He is a great fellow to look at, and to talk to; and, if you could divest your mind of the actual Scott, is just the figure you would put in his place."

His next letter was written the morning after the dinner, on Saturday the 26th June. "The great event is

* John Wilson ("Christopher North").—Ed.

over; and being gone, I am a man again. It was th most brilliant affair you can conceive; the complete success possible, from first to last. The room was crammed and more than seventy applicants for tickets were o necessity refused yesterday. Wilson was ill, but plucke up like a lion, and spoke famously. I send you a pape herewith, but the report is dismal in the extreme. The say there will be a better one—I don't know where o when. Should there be, I will send it to you. I *think* (ahem!) that I spoke rather well. It was an excellent room, and both the subjects (Wilson and Scottish Literature, and the Memory of Wilkie) were good to go upon. There were nearly two hundred ladies present. The place is so contrived that the cross table is raised enormously: much above the heads of people sitting below: and the effect on first coming in (on me, I mean) was rather tremendous. I was quite self-possessed however, and, notwithstanding the enthoosemoosy, which was very startling, as cool as a cucumber. I wish to God you had been there, as it is impossible for the 'distinguished guest' to describe the scene. It beat all natur'." . . .

"A hundred thanks for your letter," he writes four days later. "I read it this morning with the greatest pleasure and delight, and answer it with ditto, ditto. Where shall I begin—about my darlings? I am delighted with Charley's precocity. He takes arter his father, he does. God bless them, you can't imagine (*you!* how can you!) how much I long to see them. It makes me quite sorrowful to think of them. . . . Yesterday, sir, the lord provost, council, and magistrates voted me by acclamation the freedom of the city, in testimony (I quote the letter just received from 'James Forrest, lord provost') 'of the sense entertained by them of your distinguished abilities as an author.' I acknowledged this morning in appropriate terms the honour they had done me, and through me the pursuit to which I was devoted. It *is* handsome, is it not?"

The parchment scroll of the city-freedom, recording the grounds on which it was voted, hung framed in his study to the last, and was one of his valued possessions. Answering some question of mine he told me further as to the speakers, and gave some amusing glimpses of the party-

pirit which still at that time ran high in the capital of he north.

"The men who spoke at the dinner were all the most ising men here, and chiefly at the Bar. They were all, lternately, whigs and tories; with some few radicals, such s Gordon, who gave the memory of Burns. He is Wilon's son-in-law and the lord advocate's nephew—a very nasterly speaker indeed, who ought to become a disinguished man. Neaves, who gave the other poets, a *ittle* too lawyer-like for my taste, is a great gun in the ourts. Mr. Primrose is Lord Rosebery's son. Adam Black, the publisher, as you know. Dr. Alison, a very opular friend of the poor. Robertson you know. Allan ou know. Colquhoun is an advocate. All these men were selected for the toasts as being crack speakers, known men, and opposed to each other very strongly in politics. For this reason, the professors and so forth who sat upon the platform about me made no speeches and had none assigned them. I felt it was very remarkable to see such a number of grey-headed men gathered about my brown flowing locks; and it struck most of those who were present very forcibly. The judges, solicitor-general, lord-advocate, and so forth, were all here to call, the day after our arrival. The judges never go to public dinners in Scotland. Lord Meadowbank alone broke through the custom, and none of his successors have imitated him. It will give you a good notion of *party* to hear that the solicitor-general and lord-advocate refused to go, though they had previously engaged, unless the croupier or the chairman were a whig. Both (Wilson and Robertson) were tories, simply because, Jeffrey excepted, no whig could be found who was adapted to the office. The solicitor laid strict injunctions on Napier not to go if a whig were not in office. No whig was, and he stayed away. I think this is good?—bearing in mind that all the old whigs of Edinburgh were cracking their throats in the room. They give out that they were ill, and the lord-advocate did actually lie in bed all the afternoon; but this is the real truth, and one of the judges told it me with great glee. It seems they couldn't quite trust Wilson or Robertson, as they thought; and feared some tory demonstration. Nothing of the kind took place; and ever since, these men have been the loudest in their praises of the whole affair."

From Loch-earn-head Dickens wrote on Monday the 5th of July, having reached it, "wet through," at four that afternoon. "Having had a great deal to do in a crowded house on Saturday night at the theatre, we left Edinburgh yesterday morning at half-past seven, and travelled, with Fletcher * for our guide, to a place called Stewart's Hotel nine miles further than Callender. We had neglected to order rooms, and were obliged to make a sitting-room of our own bed-chamber; in which my genius for stowing furniture away was of the very greatest service. Fletcher slept in a kennel with three panes of glass in it, which formed part and parcel of a window; the other three panes whereof belonged to a man who slept on the other side of the partition. He told me this morning that he had had a nightmare all night, and had screamed horribly, he knew. The stranger, as you may suppose, hired a gig and went off at full gallop with the first glimpse of daylight. Being very tired (for we had not had more than three hours' sleep on the previous night) we lay till ten this morning; and at half-past eleven went through the Trossachs to Loch Katrine, where I walked from the hotel after tea last night. It is impossible to say what a glorious scene it was. It rained as it never does rain anywhere but here. . . .

"The inns, inside and out, are the queerest places imaginable. From the road, this one," at Loch-earn-head, "looks like a white wall, with windows in it by mistake. We have a good sitting-room though, on the first floor: as large (but not as lofty) as my study. The bedrooms are of that size which renders it impossible for you to move, after you have taken your boots off, without chipping pieces out of your legs. There isn't a basin in the Highlands which will hold my face; not a drawer which will open after you have put your clothes in it; not a water-bottle capacious enough to wet your toothbrush. The huts are wretched and miserable beyond all description. The food (for those who can pay for it) 'not bad,' as M. would say; oatcake, mutton, hotchpotch, trout from the loch, small beer bottled, marmalade, and whiskey. Of the last named article I have taken about a pint to-day. The

* Angus Fletcher, named "Kindheart" by Dickens. He was full of eccentricities that afforded Dickens no end of amusement. For years Dickens favoured him with friendship and hospitality.—Ed.

weather is what they call 'soft'—which means that the sky is a vast water-spout that never leaves off emptying itself; and the liquor has no more effect than water. . . . I don't bore you with accounts of Ben this and that, and Lochs of all sorts of names, but this is a wonderful region. The way the mists were stalking about to-day, and the clouds lying down upon the hills; the deep glens, the high rocks, the rushing waterfalls, and the roaring rivers down in deep gulfs below; were all stupendous. This house is wedged round by great heights that are lost in the clouds; and the loch, twelve miles long, stretches out its dreary length before the windows. In my next I shall soar to the sublime, perhaps; in this here present writing I confine myself to the ridiculous."

His next letter bore the date of "Ballechelish, Friday evening, ninth July, 1841, half-past nine, P.M.," and described what we had often longed to see together, the Pass of Glencoe. . . . "We left Loch-earn-head last night, and went to a place called Killin, eight miles from it, where we slept. I walked some six miles with Fletcher after we got there, to see a waterfall: and truly it was a magnificent sight, foaming and crashing down three great steeps of riven rock; leaping over the first as far off as you could carry your eye, and rumbling and foaming down into a dizzy pool below you, with a deafening roar. To-day we have had a journey of between fifty and sixty miles, through the bleakest and most desolate part of Scotland, where the hill-tops are still covered with great patches of snow, and the road winds over steep mountain passes and on the brink of deep brooks and precipices. The cold all day has been *intense*, and the rain sometimes most violent. It has been impossible to keep warm, by any means; even whiskey failed; the wind was too piercing even for that. One stage of ten miles, over a place called the Black-mount, took us two hours and a half to do; and when we came to a lone public called the King's-house, at the entrance to Glencoe—this was about three o'clock—we were well-nigh frozen. We got a fire directly, and in twenty minutes they served us some famous kippered salmon, broiled; a broiled fowl; hot mutton, ham, and poached eggs; pancakes; oatcakes; wheaten bread; butter; bottled porter; hot water, lump sugar, and whiskey; of which we made a very hearty meal.

All the way the road had been among moors and mountains with huge masses of rock, which fell down God knows where, sprinkling the ground in every direction, and giving it the aspect of the burial place of a race of giants. Now and then we passed a hut or two, with neither window nor chimney, and the smoke of the peat fire rolling out at the door. But there were not six of these dwellings in a dozen miles; and anything so bleak and wild and mighty in its loneliness, as the whole country, it is impossible to conceive. Glencoe itself is perfectly *terrible*. The pass is an awful place. It is shut in on each side by enormous rocks from which great torrents come rushing down in all directions. In amongst these rocks on one side of the pass (the left as we came) there are scores of glens, high up, which form such haunts as you might imagine yourself wandering in, in the very height and madness of a fever. They will live in my dreams for years—I was going to say as long as I live, and I seriously think so. The very recollection of them makes me shudder. . . . Well, I will not bore you with my impressions of these tremendous wilds, but they really are fearful in their grandeur and amazing solitude. Wales is a mere toy compared with them."

The impression made upon him by the Pass of Glencoe was not overstated in this letter. It continued with him; and, even where he expected to find Nature in her most desolate grandeur, on the dreary waste of an American prairie, his imagination went back with a higher satisfaction to Glencoe. But his experience of it is not yet completely told. The sequel was in a letter of two days later date from "Dalmally, Sunday, July the eleventh, 1841."

"As there was no place of this name in our route, you will be surprised to see it at the head of this present writing. But our being here is a part of such moving accidents by flood and field as will astonish you. If you should happen to have your hat on, take it off, that your hair may stand on end without any interruption. To get from Ballyhoolish (as I am obliged to spell it when Fletcher is not in the way; and he is out at this moment) to Oban, it is necessary to cross two ferries, one of which is an arm of the sea, eight or ten miles broad. Into this

ferry-boat, passengers, carriages, horses, and all, get bodily, and are got across by hook or by crook if the weather be reasonably fine. Yesterday morning, however, it blew such a strong gale that the landlord of the inn, where we had paid for horses all the way to Oban (thirty miles), honestly came upstairs just as we were starting, with the money in his hand, and told us it would be impossible to cross. There was nothing to be done but to come back five and thirty miles, through Glencoe and Inveroaran, to a place called Tyndrum, whence a road twelve miles long crosses to Dalmally, which is sixteen miles from Inverary. Accordingly we turned back, and in a great storm of wind and rain began to retrace the dreary road we had come the day before. . . . I was not at all ill pleased to have to come again through that awful Glencoe. If it had been tremendous on the previous day, yesterday it was perfectly horrific. It had rained all night, and was raining then, as it only does in these parts. Through the whole glen, which is ten miles long, torrents were boiling and foaming, and sending up in every direction spray like the smoke of great fires. They were rushing down every hill and mountain side, and tearing like devils across the path, and down into the depths of the rocks. Some of the hills looked as if they were full of silver, and had cracked in a hundred places. Others as if they were frightened, and had broken out into a deadly sweat. In others there was no compromise or division of streams, but one great torrent came roaring down with a deafening noise, and a rushing of water that was quite appalling. Such a *spaet*, in short (that's the country word), has not been known for many years, and the sights and sounds were beyond description. The postboy was not at all at his ease, and the horses were very much frightened (as well they might be) by the perpetual raging and roaring; one of them started as we came down a steep place, and we were within that much (——) of tumbling over a precipice; just then, too, the drag broke, and we were obliged to go on as we best could, without it: getting out every now and then, and hanging on at the back of the carriage to prevent its rolling down too fast, and going Heaven knows where. Well, in this pleasant state of things we came to King's-house again, having been four hours doing the sixteen miles. The rumble where Tom sat was by this

time so full of water, that he was obliged to borrow a gimlet, and bore holes in the bottom to let it run out. The horses that were to take us on, were out upon the hills, somewhere within ten miles round; and three or four bare-legged fellows went out to look for 'em, while we sat by the fire and tried to dry ourselves. At last we got off again (without the drag and with a broken spring, no smith living within ten miles), and went limping on to Inverouran. In the first three miles we were in a ditch and out again, and lost a horse's shoe. All this time it never once left off raining; and was very windy, very cold, very misty, and most intensely dismal. So we crossed the Black-mount, and came to a place we had passed the day before, where a rapid river runs over a bed of broken rock. Now this river, sir, had a bridge last winter, but the bridge broke down when the thaw came, and has never since been mended; so travellers cross upon a little platform, made of rough deal planks stretching from rock to rock; and carriages and horses ford the water, at a certain point. As the platform is the reverse of steady (we had proved this the day before), is very slippery, and affords anything but a pleasant footing, having only a trembling little rail on one side, and on the other nothing between it and the foaming stream, Kate [Mrs. Dickens] decided to remain in the carriage, and trust herself to the wheels rather than to her feet. Fletcher and I got out, and it was going away, when I advised her, as I had done several times before, to come with us; for I saw that the water was very high, the current being greatly swollen by the rain, and that the postboy had been eyeing it in a very disconcerted manner for the last half hour. This decided her to come out; and Fletcher, she, Tom, and I, began to cross, while the carriage went about a quarter of a mile down the bank, in search of a shallow place. The platform shook so much that we could only come across two at a time, and then it felt as if it were hung on springs. As to the wind and rain! . . . well, put into one gust all the wind and rain you ever saw and heard, and you'll have some faint notion of it! When we got safely to the opposite bank, there came riding up a wild highlander in a great plaid, whom we recognised as the landlord of the inn, and who without taking the least ce of us went dashing on, with the plaid he was

wrapped in streaming in the wind, screeching in Gaelic to the postboy on the opposite bank, and making the most frantic gestures you ever saw, in which he was joined by some other wild man on foot, who had come across by a short cut, knee-deep in mire and water. As we began to see what this meant, we (that is, Fletcher and I) scrambled on after them, while the boy, horses, and carriage were plunging in the water, which left only the horses' heads and the boy's body visible. By the time we got up to them, the man on horseback and the men on foot were perfectly mad with pantomime; for as to any of their shouts being heard by the boy, the water made such a great noise that they might as well have been dumb. It made me quite sick to think how I should have felt if Kate had been inside. The carriage went round and round like a great stone, the boy was as pale as death, the horses were struggling and plashing and snorting like sea-animals, and we were all roaring to the driver to throw himself off and let them and the coach go to the devil, when suddenly it came all right (having got into shallow water), and, all tumbling and dripping and jogging from side to side, climbed up to the dry land. I assure you we looked rather queer, as we wiped our faces and stared at each other in a little cluster round about it. It seemed that the man on horseback had been looking at us through a telescope as we came to the track, and knowing that the place was very dangerous, and seeing that we meant to bring the carriage, had come on at a great gallop to show the driver the only place where he could cross. By the time he came up, the man had taken the water at a wrong place, and in a word was as nearly drowned (with carriage, horses, luggage, and all) as ever man was. Was *this* a good adventure?

"We all went on to the inn—the wild man galloping on first, to get a fire lighted—and there we dined on eggs and bacon, oatcake, and whiskey; and changed and dried ourselves. The place was a mere knot of little outhouses, and in one of these there were fifty highlanders *all drunk*. . . . Some were drovers, some pipers, and some workmen engaged to build a hunting-lodge for Lord Breadalbane hard by, who had been driven in by stress of weather. One was a paper-hanger. He had come out three days before to paper the inn's best room, a chamber almost large enough to keep a Newfoundland dog in; and, from

the first half hour after his arrival to that moment, had been hopelessly and irreclaimably drunk. They were lying about in all directions: on forms, on the ground, about a loft overhead, round the turf-fire wrapped in plaids, on the tables, and under them. We paid our bill, thanked our host very heartily, gave some money to his children, and after an hour's rest came on again. At ten o'clock at night, we reached this place, and were overjoyed to find quite an English inn, with good beds (those we have slept on, yet, have always been of straw), and every possible comfort. We breakfasted this morning at half-past ten, and at three go on to Inverary to dinner."

IX.

The notion of America was in his mind when he first projected the "Clock," and a very hearty letter from Washington Irving about little Nell and the "Curiosity Shop," expressing the delight with his writings and the yearnings for himself which had indeed been pouring in upon him for some time from every part of the States, had very strongly revived it. He answered Irving with more than his own warmth: unable to thank him enough for his cordial and generous praise, or to tell him what lasting gratification it had given. After interchange of these letters the subject was frequently revived; upon his return from Scotland it began to take shape as a thing that somehow or other, at no very distant date, *must be;* and at last, near the end of a letter filled with many unimportant things, the announcement, doubly underlined, came to me.

The decision once taken, he was in his usual fever until its difficulties were disposed of. The objections to separation from the children led at first to the notion of taking them, but this was as quickly abandoned; and what remained to be overcome yielded readily to the kind offices of Macready, the offer of whose home to the little ones during the time of absence, though not accepted to the full extent, gave yet the assurance needed to quiet natural apprehensions. All this, including an arrangement for publication of such notes as might occur to him on the

journey, took but a few days; and I was reading in my chambers a letter he had written the previous day from Broadstairs, when a note from him reached me, written that morning in London, to tell me he was on his way to take share of my breakfast. He had come overland by Canterbury after posting his first letter; had seen Macready the previous night; and had completed some part of the arrangements. This mode of rapid procedure was characteristic of him at all similar times.

"Now" (19th September, 1841) "to astonish you. After balancing, considering, and weighing the matter in every point of view, I HAVE MADE UP MY MIND (WITH GOD'S LEAVE) TO GO TO AMERICA—AND TO START AS SOON AFTER CHRISTMAS AS IT WILL BE SAFE TO GO."

We had some days of much enjoyment at the end of the year, and the Britannia, which was to take the travellers from us in January, brought over to them in December all sorts of cordialities, anticipations and stretchings-forth of hands, in token of the welcome awaiting them. On New-Year's-eve they dined with me, and I with them on New-Year's-day; when we sealed up his wine cellar, after opening therein some sparkling Moselle in honour of the ceremony, and drinking it then and there to his happy return. Next morning (it was a Sunday) I accompanied them to Liverpool; Maclise having been suddenly stayed by his mother's death; the intervening day and its occupations have been humorously sketched in his American book; and on the fourth they sailed.

He stood out against sickness only for the day following that on which they sailed. For the three following days he kept his bed; miserable enough; and had not, until the eighth day of the voyage, six days before the date of his letter, been able to get to work at the dinner table. What he then observed of his fellow-travellers, and had to tell of their life on board, has been set forth in his "Notes" with delightful humour; but in its first freshness I received it in this letter, and some whimsical passages, then suppressed, there will be no harm in printing now.

"We have eighty-six passengers; and such a strange collection of beasts never was got together upon the sea, since the days of the Ark. I have never been in the saloon

since the first day; the noise, the smell, and the closeness being quite intolerable. I have only been on deck *once!*—and then I was surprised and disappointed at the smallness of the panorama. The sea, running as it does and has done, is very stupendous, and viewed from the air or some great height would be grand no doubt. But seen from the wet and rolling decks, in this weather and these circumstances, it only impresses one giddily and painfully. I was very glad to turn away, and come below again.

"I have established myself, from the first, in the ladies' cabin—you remember it? I'll describe its other occupants, and our way of passing the time, to you.

"First, for the occupants. Kate, and I, and Anne—when she is out of bed, which is not often. A queer little Scotch body, a Mrs. P—, whose husband is a silversmith in New York. He married her at Glasgow three years ago, and bolted the day after the wedding; being (which he had not told her) heavily in debt. Since then she has been living with her mother; and she is now going out under the protection of a male cousin, to give him a year's trial. If she is not comfortable at the expiration of that time, she means to go back to Scotland again. A Mrs. B—, about twenty years old, whose husband is on board with her. He is a young Englishman domiciled in New York, and by trade (as well as I can make out) a woollen-draper. They have been married a fortnight. A Mr. and Mrs. C—, marvellously fond of each other, complete the catalogue. Mrs. C— I have settled, is a publican's daughter, and Mr. C— is running away with her, the till, the time-piece off the bar mantel-shelf, the mother's gold watch from the pocket at the head of the bed; and other miscellaneous property. The women are all pretty; unusually pretty. I never saw such good faces together, anywhere."

Their "way of passing the time" will be found in the "Notes" much as it was written to me; except that there was one point connected with the card-playing which he feared might overtax the credulity of his readers, but which he protested had occurred more than once. "Apropos of rolling, I have forgotten to mention that in playing whist we are obliged to put the tricks in our pockets, to keep them from disappearing altogether; and that five or six times in the course of every rubber we are all flung

from our seats, roll out at different doors, and keep on rolling until we are picked up by stewards. This has become such a matter of course, that we go through it with perfect gravity; and when we are bolstered up on our sofas again, resume our conversation or our game at the point where it was interrupted." The news that excited them from day to day, too, of which little more than a hint appears in the "Notes," is worth giving as originally written.

"As for news, we have more of that than you would think for. One man lost fourteen pounds at vingt-un in the saloon yesterday, or another got drunk before dinner was over, or another was blinded with lobster sauce spilt over him by the steward, or another had a fall on deck and fainted. The ship's cook was drunk yesterday morning (having got at some salt-water-damaged whiskey), and the captain ordered the boatswain to play upon him with the hose of the fire engine until he roared for mercy—which he didn't get; for he was sentenced to look out, for four hours at a stretch for four nights running, without a great-coat, and to have his grog stopped. Four dozen plates were broken at dinner. One steward fell down the cabin-stairs with a round of beef, and injured his foot severely. Another steward fell down after him, and cut his eye open. The baker's taken ill: so is the pastry-cook. A new man, sick to death, has been required to fill the place of the latter officer, and has been dragged out of bed and propped up in a little house upon deck, between two casks, and ordered (the captain standing over him) to make and roll out pie-crust; which he protests, with tears in his eyes, it is death to him in his bilious state to look at. Twelve dozen of bottled porter has got loose upon deck, and the bottles are rolling about distractedly, overhead. Lord Mulgrave (a handsome fellow, by the by, to look at, and nothing but a good 'un to go) laid a wager with twenty-five other men last night, whose berths, like his, are in the fore-cabin which can only be got at by crossing the deck, that he would reach his cabin first. Watches were set by the captain's, and they sallied forth, wrapped up in coats and storm-caps. The sea broke over the ship so violently, that they were *five-and-twenty minutes* holding on by the hand-rail at the starboard paddle-box, drenched to the skin by every wave, and not

daring to go on or come back, lest they should be washed overboard. News! A dozen murders in town wouldn't interest us half as much."

Nevertheless their excitements were not over. At the very end of the voyage came an incident very lightly touched in the "Notes," but more freely told to me under date of the 21st January. "We were running into Halifax harbour on Wednesday night, with little wind and a bright moon; had made the light at its outer entrance, and given the ship in charge to the pilot; were playing our rubber, all in good spirits (for it had been comparatively smooth for some days, with tolerably dry decks and other unusual comforts), when suddenly the ship STRUCK! A rush upon deck followed of course. The men (I mean the crew! think of this) were kicking off their shoes and throwing off their jackets preparatory to swimming ashore; the pilot was beside himself; the passengers dismayed; and everything in the most intolerable confusion and hurry. Breakers were roaring ahead; the land within a couple of hundred yards; and the vessel driving upon the surf, although her paddles were worked backwards, and everything done to stay her course. It is not the custom of steamers, it seems, to have an anchor ready. An accident occurred in getting ours over the sides; and for half an hour we were throwing up rockets, burning blue lights, and firing signals of distress, all of which remained unanswered, though we were so close to the shore that we could see the waving branches of the trees. All this time, as we veered about, a man was heaving the lead every two minutes; the depths of water constantly decreasing; and nobody self-possessed but [Captain] Hewitt. They let go the anchor at last, got out a boat, and sent her ashore with the fourth officer, the pilot, and four men aboard, to try and find out where we were. The pilot had no idea; but Hewitt put his little finger upon a certain part of the chart, and was as confident of the exact spot (though he had never been there in his life) as if he had lived there from infancy. The boat's return about an hour afterwards proved him to be quite right. We had got into a place called the Eastern Passage, in a sudden fog and through the pilot's folly. We had struck upon a mud-bank, and driven into a perfect little pond, surrounded by banks and rocks and shoals of all kinds;

weather is what they call 'soft'—which means that the sky is a vast water-spout that never leaves off emptying itself; and the liquor has no more effect than water. . . . I don't bore you with accounts of Ben this and that, and Lochs of all sorts of names, but this is a wonderful region. The way the mists were stalking about to-day, and the clouds lying down upon the hills; the deep glens, the high rocks, the rushing waterfalls, and the roaring rivers down in deep gulfs below; were all stupendous. This house is wedged round by great heights that are lost in the clouds; and the loch, twelve miles long, stretches out its dreary length before the windows. In my next I shall soar to the sublime, perhaps; in this here present writing I confine myself to the ridiculous."

His next letter bore the date of "Ballechelish, Friday evening, ninth July, 1841, half-past nine, P.M.," and described what we had often longed to see together, the Pass of Glencoe. . . . "We left Loch-earn-head last night, and went to a place called Killin, eight miles from it, where we slept. I walked some six miles with Fletcher after we got there, to see a waterfall: and truly it was a magnificent sight, foaming and crashing down three great steeps of riven rock; leaping over the first as far off as you could carry your eye, and rumbling and foaming down into a dizzy pool below you, with a deafening roar. To-day we have had a journey of between fifty and sixty miles, through the bleakest and most desolate part of Scotland, where the hill-tops are still covered with great patches of snow, and the road winds over steep mountain passes and on the brink of deep brooks and precipices. The cold all day has been *intense*, and the rain sometimes most violent. It has been impossible to keep warm, by any means; even whiskey failed; the wind was too piercing even for that. One stage of ten miles, over a place called the Black-mount, took us two hours and a half to do; and when we came to a lone public called the King's-house, at the entrance to Glencoe—this was about three o'clock—we were well-nigh frozen. We got a fire directly, and in twenty minutes they served us some famous kippered salmon, broiled; a broiled fowl; hot mutton, ham, and poached eggs; pancakes; oatcakes; wheaten bread; butter; bottled porter; hot water, lump sugar, and whiskey; of which we made a very hearty meal.

hour at least) working in. I was standing in full fig on the paddle-box beside the captain, staring about me, when suddenly, long before we were moored to the wharf, a dozen men came leaping on board at the peril of their lives, with great bundles of newspapers under their arms; worsted comforters (very much the worse for wear) round their necks; and so forth. 'Aha!' says I, 'this is like our London Bridge': believing of course that these visitors were newsboys. But what do you think of their being EDITORS? And what do you think of their tearing violently up to me and beginning to shake hands like madmen? Oh! If you could have seen how I wrung their wrists! And if you could but know how I hated one man in very dirty gaiters, and with very protruding upper teeth, who said to all comers after him, 'So you've been introduced to our friend Dickens—eh?' There was one among them, though, who really was of use; a Doctor S., editor of the ——. He ran off here (two miles at least), and ordered rooms and dinner. And in course of time Kate, and I, and Lord Mulgrave (who was going back to his regiment at Montreal on Monday, and had agreed to live with us in the meanwhile) sat down in a spacious and handsome room to a very handsome dinner, 'bating peculiarities of putting on table, and had forgotten the ship entirely. A Mr. Alexander, to whom I had written from England, promising to sit for a portrait, was on board directly we touched the land, and brought us here in his carriage. Then, after sending a present of most beautiful flowers, he left us to ourselves, and we thanked him for it."

"'It is no nonsense, and no common feeling,' wrote Dr. Channing to me yesterday. 'It is all heart. There never was, and never will be, such a triumph.' And it is a good thing, is it not, . . . to find those fancies it has given me and you the greatest satisfaction to think of, at the core of it all? It makes my heart quieter, and me a more retiring, sober, tranquil man to watch the effect of those thoughts in all this noise and hurry, even than if I sat, pen in hand, to put them down for the first time. I feel, in the best aspects of this welcome, something of the presence and influence of that spirit which directs my life, and through a heavy sorrow has pointed upward with unchanging finger for more than four years past. And if

I know my heart, not twenty times this praise would move me to an act of folly." . . .

There were but two days more before the post left for England, and the close of this part of his letter sketched the engagements that awaited him on leaving Boston. "We leave here next Saturday. We go to a place called Worcester, about seventy-five miles off, to the house of the governor of this place; and stay with him all Sunday. On Monday we go on by railroad about fifty miles farther to a town called Springfield, where I am met by a 'reception committee' from Hartford twenty miles farther, and carried on by the multitude: I am sure I don't know how, but I shouldn't wonder if they appear with a triumphal car. On Wednesday I have a public dinner there. On Friday I shall be obliged to present myself in public again, at a place called New Haven, about thirty miles farther. On Saturday evening I hope to be at New York; and there I shall stay ten days or a fortnight. You will suppose that I have enough to do. I am sitting for a portrait and for a bust. I have the correspondence of a secretary of state, and the engagements of a fashionable physician. I have a secretary whom I take on with me. He is a young man of the name of Q.; was strongly recommended to me; is most modest, obliging, silent, and willing; and does his work *well*. He boards and lodges at my expense when we travel; and his salary is ten dollars per month—about two pounds five of our English money. There will be dinners and balls at Washington, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and I believe everywhere. In Canada, I have promised to *play* at the theatre with the officers, for the benefit of a charity. We are already weary, at times, past all expression; and I finish this by means of a pious fraud. We were engaged to a party, and have written to say we are both desperately ill. . . . 'Well,' I can fancy you saying, 'but about his impressions of Boston and the Americans?' —Of the latter, I will not say a word until I have seen more of them, and have gone into the interior. I will only say, now, that we have never yet been required to dine at a table d'hôte; that, thus far, our rooms are as much our own here, as they would be at the Clarendon; that but for an odd phrase now and then—such as *Snap of cold weather; a tongue-y man* for a talkative fellow; *Possible?* as a solitary interrogation; and *Yes?* for indeed

—I should have marked, so far, no difference whatever between the parties here and those I have left behind. The women are very beautiful, but they soon fade; the general breeding is neither stiff nor forward; the good nature, universal. If you ask the way to a place—of some common waterside man, who don't know you from Adam—he turns and goes with you. Universal deference is paid to ladies; and they walk about at all seasons, wholly unprotected. . . . This hotel is a trifle smaller than Finsbury Square; and is made so infernally hot (I use the expression advisedly) by means of a furnace with pipes running through the passages, that we can hardly bear it. There are no curtains to the beds, or to the bedroom windows. I am told there never are, hardly, all through America. The bedrooms are indeed very bare of furniture. Ours is nearly as large as your great room, and has a wardrobe in it of painted wood not larger (I appeal to K.) than an English watch-box. I slept in this room for two nights, quite satisfied with the belief that it was a shower-bath."

The last addition made to this letter, from which many most vivid pages of the "Notes" (among them the bright quaint picture of Boston streets) were taken with small alteration, bore date the 29th of January. "I hardly know what to add to all this long and unconnected history. Dana, the author of that 'Two Years before the Mast,' is a very nice fellow indeed; and in appearance not at all the man you would expect. He is short, mild-looking, and has a care-worn face. His father is exactly like George Cruikshank after a night's jollity—only shorter. The professors at the Cambridge university, Longfellow, Felton, Jared Sparks, are noble fellows. So is Kenyon's friend, Ticknor. Bancroft is a famous man; a straightforward, manly, earnest heart. Doctor Channing I will tell you more of, after I have breakfasted alone with him next Wednesday. . . . Sumner is of great service to me. . . . The president of the Senate here presides at my dinner on Tuesday. Lord Mulgrave lingered with us till last Tuesday (we had our little captain to dinner on the Monday), and then went on to Canada. Kate is quite well, and so is Anne, whose smartness surpasses belief. They yearn for home, and so do I.

"Of course you will not see in the papers any true account of our voyage, for they keep the dangers of the

passage, when there are any, very quiet. I observed so many perils peculiar to steamers that I am still undecided whether we shall not return by one of the New York liners. On the night of the storm, I was wondering within myself where we should be, if the chimney were blown overboard: in which case, it needs no great observation to discover that the vessel must be instantly on fire from stem to stern. When I went on deck next day, I saw that it was held up by a perfect forest of chains and ropes, which had been rigged in the night. Hewitt told me (when we were on shore, not before) that they had men lashed, hoisted up, and swinging there, all through the gale, getting these stays about it. This is not agreeable—is it? . . .

"On looking back through these sheets, I am astonished to find how little I have told you, and how much I have, even now, in store which shall be yours by word of mouth. The American poor, the American factories, the institutions of all kinds—I have a book, already. There is no man in this town, or in this State of New England, who has not a blazing fire and a meat dinner every day of his life. A flaming sword in the air would not attract so much attention as a beggar in the streets. There are no charity uniforms, no wearisome repetition of the same dull ugly dress, in that blind school.* All are attired after their own tastes, and every boy and girl has his or her individuality as distinct and unimpaired as you would find it in their own homes. At the theatres, all the ladies sit in the fronts of the boxes. The gallery are as quiet as the dress circle at dear Drury Lane. A man with seven heads would be no sight at all, compared with one who couldn't read and write." . . .

Unmistakably to be seen, in this earliest of his letters, is the quite fresh and unalloyed impression first received by him at this memorable visit; and it is due, as well to himself as to the country which welcomed him, that this should be considered independently of any modification or change it afterwards underwent. Of the fervency and universality of the welcome there could be no doubt, and as little that it sprang from feelings honourable both to

* His descriptions of this school, and of the case of Laura Bridgeman, will be found in the "Notes."

giver and receiver. The sources of Dickens's popularity in England were in truth multiplied many-fold in America. The hearty, cordial, and humane side of his genius had fascinated them quite as much; but there was also something beyond this. The cheerful temper that had given new beauty to the commonest forms of life, the abounding humour which had added largely to all innocent enjoyment, the honourable and in those days rare distinction of America which left no home in the Union inaccessible to such advantages, had made Dickens the object everywhere of grateful admiration, for the most part of personal affection. But even this was not all. I do not say it either to lessen or increase the value of the tribute, but to express simply what it was; and there cannot be a question that the young English author, whom by his language the Americans claimed equally for their own, was almost universally regarded by them as a kind of embodied protest against what was believed to be worst in the institutions of England, depressing and overshadowing in a social sense, and adverse to purely intellectual influences. In all their newspapers of every grade at the time, the feeling of triumph over the mother country in this particular is predominant. You worship titles, they said, and military heroes, and millionaires, and we of the New World want to show you, by extending the kind of homage that the Old World reserves for kings and conquerors to a young man with nothing to distinguish him but his heart and his genius, what it is we think in these parts worthier of honour than birth or wealth, a title or a sword. Well, there was something in this, too, apart from a mere crowing over the mother country. The Americans had honestly more than a common share in the triumphs of a genius, which in more than one sense had made the deserts and wildernesses of life to blossom like the rose. They were entitled to select for a welcome, as emphatic as they might please to render it, the writer who pre-eminently in his generation had busied himself to "detect and save," in human creatures, such sparks of virtue as misery or vice had not availed to extinguish; to discover what is beautiful and comely, under what commonly passes for the ungainly and deformed; to draw happiness and hopefulness from despair itself; and, above all, so to have made known to his own countrymen the wants and suffer-

ings of the poor, the ignorant, and the neglected, that they could be left in absolute neglect no more. "A triumph has been prepared for him," wrote Mr. Ticknor to our dear friend Kenyon, "in which the whole country will join. He will have a progress through the States unequalled since Lafayette's." Daniel Webster told the Americans that Dickens had done more already to ameliorate the condition of the English poor than all the statesmen Great Britain had sent into Parliament. His sympathies are such, exclaimed Doctor Channing, as to recommend him in an especial manner to us. He seeks out that class, in order to benefit them, with whom American institutions and laws sympathise most strongly; and it is in the passions, sufferings, and virtues of the mass that he has found his subjects of most thrilling interest. "He shows that life in its rudest form may wear a tragic grandeur; that amidst follies and excesses, provoking laughter or scorn, the moral feelings do not wholly die; and that the haunts of the blackest crime are sometimes lighted up by the presence and influence of the noblest souls. His pictures have a tendency to awaken sympathy with our race, and to change the unfeeling indifference which has prevailed towards the depressed multitude, into a sorrowful and indignant sensibility to their wrongs and woes."

His second letter, radiant with the same kindly warmth that gave always charm to his genius, was dated from the Carlton Hotel, New York, on the 14th February [1842], but its only allusion of any public interest was to the beginning of his agitation of the question of international copyright. He went to America with no express intention of starting this question in any way; and certainly with no belief that such remark upon it as a person in his position could alone be expected to make, would be resented strongly by any sections of the American people. But he was not long left in doubt on this head. He had spoken upon it twice publicly, "to the great indignation of some of the editors here, who are attacking me for so doing, right and left." On the other hand, all the best men had assured him, that, if only at once followed up in England, the blow struck might bring about a change in the law.

Three days later he began another letter. There was

nothing in its personal details, or in those relating to international copyright, available for his "Notes"; from which they were excluded by the two rules he observed in that book, the first to be altogether silent as to the copyright discussion, and the second to abstain from all mention of individuals. But there can be no harm here in violating either rule, for, as Sydney Smith said with his humorous sadness, We are all dead now.

"Carlton House, New York: Thursday, February Seventeenth, 1842. . . . Lest this letter should reach you before another letter which I dispatched from here last Monday, let me say in the first place that I *did* dispatch a brief epistle to you on that day, together with a newspaper, and a pamphlet touching the Boz ball; and that I put in the post office at Boston another newspaper for you containing an account of the dinner, which was just about to come off, you remember, when I wrote to you from that city.

"It was a most superb affair; and the speaking *admirable*. Indeed the general talent for public speaking here, is one of the most striking of the things that force themselves upon an Englishman's notice. As every man looks on to being a member of Congress, every man prepares himself for it; and the result is quite surprising. You will observe one odd custom—the drinking of sentiments. It is quite extinct with us, but here everybody is expected to be prepared with an epigram as a matter of course.

"We left Boston on the fifth, and went away with the governor of the city to stay till Monday at his house at Worcester. He married a sister of Bancroft's, and another sister of Bancroft's went down with us. The village of Worcester is one of the prettiest in New England. . . . On Monday morning at nine o'clock we started again by railroad and went on to Springfield, where a deputation of two were waiting, and everything was in readiness that the utmost attention could suggest. Owing to the mildness of the weather, the Connecticut river was 'open,' *videlicet* not frozen, and they had a steamboat ready to carry us on to Hartford; thus saving a land-journey of only twenty-five miles, but on such roads at this time of year that it takes nearly twelve hours to accomplish! The boat was very small, the river full of floating blocks of ice, and the depth where we went (to avoid the ice and the

current) not more than a few inches. After two hours and a half of this queer travelling we got to Hartford. There, there was quite an English inn; except in respect of the bedrooms, which are always uncomfortable; and the best committee of management that has yet presented itself. They kept us more quiet, and were more considerate and thoughtful, even to their own exclusion, than any I have yet had to deal with. Kate's face being horribly bad, I determined to give her a rest here; and accordingly wrote to get rid of my engagement at New Haven, on that plea. We remained in this town until the eleventh: holding a formal levee every day for two hours, and receiving on each from two hundred to three hundred people. At five o'clock on the afternoon of the eleventh, we set off (still by railroad) for New Haven, which we reached about eight o'clock. The moment we had had tea, we were forced to open another levee for the students and professors of the college (the largest in the States), and the townspeople. I suppose we shook hands, before going to bed, with considerably more than five hundred people; and I stood, as a matter of course, the whole time. . . .

"Now, the deputation of two had come on with us from Hartford; and at New Haven there was another committee; and the immense fatigue and worry of all this, no words can exaggerate. We had been in the morning over jails and deaf and dumb asylums; had stopped on the journey at a place called Wallingford, where a whole town had turned out to see me, and to gratify whose curiosity the train stopped expressly; had had a day of great excitement and exertion on the Thursday (this being Friday); and were inexpressibly worn out. And when at last we got to bed and were 'going' to fall asleep, the choristers of the college turned out in a body, under the window, and serenaded us! We had had, by the by, another serenade at Hartford, from a Mr. Adams (a nephew of John Quincy Adams) and a German friend. *They* were most beautiful singers: and when they began, in the dead of the night, in a long, musical, echoing passage outside our chamber door; singing, in low voices to guitars, about home and absent friends and other topics that they knew would interest us; we were more moved than I can tell you. In the midst of my sentimentality

though, a thought occurred to me which made me laugh so immoderately that I was obliged to cover my face with the bedclothes. 'Good Heavens!' I said to Kate, 'what a monstrously ridiculous and commonplace appearance my boots must have, outside the door!' I never *was* so impressed with a sense of the absurdity of boots, in all my life.

"The New Haven serenade was not so good; though there were a great many voices, and a 'reg'lar' band. It hadn't the heart of the other. Before it was six hours old, we were dressing with might and main, and making ready for our departure: it being a drive of twenty minutes to the steamboat, and the hour of sailing nine o'clock. After a hasty breakfast we started off; and after another levee on the deck (actually on the deck), and 'three times three for Dickens,' moved towards New York.

"I was delighted to find on board a Mr. Felton whom I had known at Boston. He is the Greek professor at Cambridge, and was going on to the ball and dinner. Like most men of his class whom I have seen, he is a most delightful fellow—unaffected, hearty, genial, jolly; quite an Englishman of the best sort. We drank all the porter on board, ate all the cold pork and cheese, and were very merry indeed. I should have told you, in its proper place, that both at Hartford and New Haven a regular bank was subscribed, by these committees, for *all* my expenses. No bill was to be got at the bar, and everything was paid for. But as I would on no account suffer this to be done, I stoutly and positively refused to budge an inch until Mr. Q should have received the bills from the landlord's own hands, and paid them to the last farthing. Finding it impossible to move me, they suffered me, most unwillingly, to carry the point.

"About half past two, we arrived here. In half an hour more, we reached this hotel, where a very splendid suite of rooms was prepared for us; and where everything is very comfortable, and no doubt (as at Boston) *enormously* dear. Just as we sat down to dinner, David Colden made his appearance; and when he had gone, and we were taking our wine, Washington Irving came in alone, with open arms. And here he stopped, until ten o'clock at night. Having got so far, I shall divide my discourse into four points. First, the ball. Secondly, some slight speci-

mens of a certain phase of character in the Americans. Thirdly, international copyright. Fourthly, my life here, and projects to be carried out while I remain.

"Firstly, the ball. It came off last Monday (*vide* pamphlet). 'At a quarter past 9, exactly' (I quote the printed order of proceeding), we were waited upon by 'David Colden, Esquire, and General George Morris'; habited, the former in full ball costume, the latter in the full dress uniform of Heaven knows what regiment of militia. The general took Kate, Colden gave his arm to me, and we proceeded downstairs to a carriage at the door, which took us to the stage door of the theatre: greatly to the disappointment of an enormous crowd who were besetting the main door, and making a most tremendous hullaballoo. The scene on our entrance was very striking. There were three thousand people present in full dress; from the roof to the floor, the theatre was decorated magnificently; and the light, glitter, glare, show, noise, and cheering, baffle my descriptive powers. We were walked in through the centre of the centre dress-box, the front whereof was taken out for the occasion; so to the back of the stage, where the mayor and other dignitaries received us; and we were then paraded all round the enormous ball-room, twice, for the gratification of the many-headed. That done, we began to dance—Heaven knows how we did it, for there was no room. And we continued dancing until, being no longer able even to stand, we slipped away quietly, and came back to the hotel. All the documents connected with this extraordinary festival (quite unparalleled here) we have preserved; so you may suppose that on this head alone we shall have enough to show you when we come home. The bill of fare for supper is, in its amount and extent, quite a curiosity.

"Now, the phase of character in the Americans which amuses me most, was put before me in its most amusing shape by the circumstances attending this affair. I had noticed it before, and have since, but I cannot better illustrate it than by reference to this theme. Of course I can do nothing but in some shape or other it gets into the newspapers. All manner of lies get there, and occasionally a truth so twisted and distorted that it has as much resemblance to the real fact as Quilp's leg to

Taglioni's. But with this ball to come off, the newspapers were if possible unusually loquacious; and in their accounts of me, and my seeings, sayings, and doings on the Saturday night and Sunday before, they describe my manner, mode of speaking, dressing, and so forth. In doing this, they report that I am a very charming fellow (of course), and have a very free and easy way with me; 'which,' say they, 'at first amused a few fashionables'; but soon pleased them exceedingly. Another paper, coming after the ball, dwells upon its splendour and brilliancy; hugs itself and its readers upon all that Dickens saw; and winds up by gravely expressing its conviction, that Dickens was never in such society in England as he has seen in New York, and that its high and striking tone cannot fail to make an indelible impression on his mind! For the same reason I am always represented, whenever I appear in public, as being 'very pale'; 'apparently thunderstruck'; and utterly confounded by all I see. . . . You recognise the queer vanity which is at the root of all this? I have plenty of stories in connection with it to amuse you with when I return."

"*Twenty-fourth February.*

"After the ball I was laid up with a very bad sore throat, which confined me to the house four whole days; and as I was unable to write, or indeed to do anything but doze and drink lemonade, I missed the ship. . . . I have still a horrible cold, and so has Kate, but in other respects we are all right. I proceed to my third head: the international copyright question.

"I believe there is no country, on the face of the earth, where there is less freedom of opinion on any subject in reference to which there is a broad difference of opinion, than in this. . . . There!—I write the words with reluctance, disappointment, and sorrow; but I believe it from the bottom of my soul. I spoke, as you know, of international copyright, at Boston; and I spoke of it again at Hartford. My friends were paralysed with wonder at such audacious daring. The notion that I, a man alone by himself, in America, should venture to suggest to the Americans that there was one point on which they were neither just to their own countrymen nor to us, actually struck the boldest dumb! Washington Irving, Prescott,

Hoffman, Bryant, Halleck, Dana, Washington Allston—every man who writes in this country is devoted to the question, and not one of them *dares* to raise his voice and complain of the atrocious state of the law. It is nothing that of all men living I am the greatest loser by it. It is nothing that I have a claim to speak and be heard. The wonder is that a breathing man can be found with temerity enough to suggest to the Americans the possibility of their having done wrong. I wish you could have seen the faces that I saw, down both sides of the table at Hartford, when I began to talk about Scott. I wish you could have heard how I gave it out. My blood so boiled as I thought of the monstrous injustice that I felt as if I were twelve feet high when I thrust it down their throats.

"I had no sooner made that second speech than such an outcry began (for the purpose of deterring me from doing the like in this city) as an Englishman can form no notion of. Anonymous letters; verbal dissuasions; newspaper attacks making Colt (a murderer who is attracting great attention here) an angel by comparison with me; assertions that I was no gentleman, but a mere mercenary scoundrel; coupled with the most monstrous misrepresentations relative to my design and purpose in visiting the United States; came pouring in upon me every day. The dinner committee here (composed of the first gentlemen in America, remember that) were so dismayed, that they besought me not to pursue the subject *although they every one agreed with me.* I answered that I would. That nothing should deter me. . . . That the shame was theirs, not mine; and that as I would not spare them when I got home, I would not be silenced here. Accordingly, when the night came, I asserted my right, with all the means I could command to give it dignity, in face, manner, or words; and I believe that if you could have seen and heard me, you would have loved me better for it than ever you did in your life."

Washington Irving was chairman of this dinner, and having from the first a dread that he should break down in his speech, the catastrophe came accordingly. Near him sat the Cambridge professor who had come with Dickens by boat from New Haven, with whom already a warm friendship had been formed that lasted for life, and

who has pleasantly sketched what happened. Mr. Felton saw Irving constantly in the interval of preparation, and could not but despond at his daily iterated foreboding of *I shall certainly break down:* though, besides the real dread, there was a sly humour which heightened its whimsical horror with an irresistible drollery. But the professor plucked up hope a little when the night came, and he saw that Irving had laid under his plate the manuscript of his speech. During dinner, nevertheless, his old foreboding cry was still heard, and "at last the moment arrived; Mr. Irving rose; and the deafening and long-continued applause by no means lessened his apprehension. He began in his pleasant voice; got through two or three sentences pretty easily, but in the next hesitated; and, after one or two attempts to go on, gave it up, with a graceful allusion to the tournament and the troop of knights all armed and eager for the fray; and ended with the toast CHARLES DICKENS, THE GUEST OF THE NATION. *There!* said he, as he resumed his seat amid applause as great as had greeted his rising, *There! I told you I should break down, and I've done it!*" He was in London a few months later, on his way to Spain; and I heard Thomas Moore describe at Rogers's table the difficulty there had been to overcome his reluctance, because of this break-down, to go to the dinner of the Literary Fund on the occasion of Prince Albert's presiding. "However," said Moore, "I told him only to attempt a few words, and I suggested what they should be, and he said he'd never thought of anything so easy, and he went and did famously." I knew very well, as I listened, that this had *not* been the result; but as the distinguished American had found himself, on this second occasion, not among orators as in New York, but among men as unable as himself to speak in public, and equally able to do better things,* he was doubtless more reconciled to his own

* The dinner was on the 10th of May, and early the following morning I had a letter about it from Mr. Blanchard, containing these words: "Washington Irving couldn't utter a word for trembling, and Moore was as little as usual. But, poor Tom Campbell, great Heavens! what a spectacle! Amid roars of laughter he began a sentence three times about something that Dugald Stewart or Lord Bacon had said, and never could get beyond those words. The Prince was capital, though deucedly frightened. He seems unaffected and amiable, as well as very clever."

failure. I have been led to this digression by Dickens's silence on his friend's break-down. He had so great a love for Irving that it was painful to speak of him as at any disadvantage, and of the New York dinner he wrote only in its connection with his own copyright speeches.

"The effect of all this copyright agitation at least has been to awaken a great sensation on both sides of the subject; the respectable newspapers and reviews taking up the cudgels as strongly in my favour, as the others have done against me. Some of the vagabonds take great credit to themselves (grant us patience!) for having made me popular by publishing my books in newspapers: as if there were no England, no Scotland, no Germany, no place but America in the whole world. A splendid satire upon this kind of trash has just occurred. A man came here yesterday, and demanded, not besought but demanded, pecuniary assistance; and fairly bullied Mr. Q. for money. When I came home, I dictated a letter to this effect—that such applications reached me in vast numbers every day; that if I were a man of fortune, I could not render assistance to all who sought it; and that, depending on my own exertion for all the help I could give, I regretted to say I could afford him none. Upon this, my gentleman sits down and writes me that he is an itinerant bookseller; that he is the first man who sold my books in New York; that he is distressed in the city where I am revelling in luxury; that he thinks it rather strange that the man who wrote 'Nickleby' should be utterly destitute of feeling; and that he would have me 'take care I don't repent it.' What do you think of *that?*—as Mac would say. I thought it such a good commentary, that I dispatched the letter to the editor of the only English newspaper here, and told him he might print it if he liked.

"I will tell you what *I* should like, my dear friend, always supposing that your judgment concurs with mine; and that you would take the trouble to get such a document. I should like to have a short letter addressed to me, by the principal English authors who signed the international copyright petition, expressive of their sense that I have done my duty to the cause. I am sure I deserve it, but I don't wish it on that ground. It is because its publication in the best journals here would unquestion-

ably do great good. As the gauntlet is down, let us go on Clay has already sent a gentleman to me express from Washington (where I shall be on the 6th or 7th of next month) to declare his strong interest in the matter, his cordial approval of the 'manly' course I have held in reference to it, and his desire to stir in it if possible. I have lighted up such a blaze that a meeting of the foremost people on the other side (very respectfully and properly conducted in reference to me, personally, I am bound to say) was held in this town t'other night. And it would be a thousand pities if we did not strike as hard as we can, now that the iron is so hot.

"I have come at last, and it is time I did, to my life here, and intentions for the future. I can do nothing that I want to do, go nowhere where I want to go, and see nothing that I want to see. If I turn into the street, I am followed by a multitude. If I stay at home, the house becomes, with callers, like a fair. If I visit a public institution, with only one friend, the directors come down incontinently, waylay me in the yard, and address me in a long speech. I go to a party in the evening, and am so inclosed and hemmed about by people, stand where I will, that I am exhausted for want of air. I dine out, and have to talk about everything, to everybody. I go to church for quiet, and there is a violent rush to the neighbourhood of the pew I sit in, and the clergyman preaches *at* me. I take my seat in a railroad car, and the very conductor won't leave me alone. I get out at a station, and can't drink a glass of water, without having a hundred people looking down my throat when I open my mouth to swallow. Conceive what all this is! Then by every post, letters on letters arrive, all about nothing, and all demanding an immediate answer. This man is offended because I won't live in his house; and that man is thoroughly disgusted because I won't go out more than four times in one evening. I have no rest or peace, and am in a perpetual worry.

"Under these febrile circumstances, which this climate especially favours, I have come to the resolution that I will not (so far as my will has anything to do with the matter) accept any more public entertainments or public recognitions of any kind, during my stay in the United States; and in pursuance of this determination I have

refused invitations from Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Virginia, Albany, and Providence. Heaven knows whether this will be effectual."

"The ladies of America are decidedly and unquestionably beautiful. Their complexions are not so good as those of Englishwomen; their beauty does not last so long; and their figures are very inferior. But they are most beautiful. I still reserve my opinion of the national character —just whispering that I tremble for a radical coming here, unless he is a radical on principle, by reason and reflection, and from the sense of right. I fear that if he were anything else, he would return home a tory. . . . I say no more on that head for two months from this time, save that I do fear that the heaviest blow ever dealt at liberty will be dealt by this country, in the failure of its example to the earth. The scenes that are passing in Congress now, all tending to the separation of the States, fill one with such a deep disgust that I dislike the very name of Washington (meaning the place, not the man), and am repelled by the mere thought of approaching it."

"I have in my portmanteau a petition for an international copyright law, signed by all the best American writers with Washington Irving at their head. They have requested me to hand it to Clay for presentation, and to back it with any remarks I may think proper to offer. So 'Hoo-roar for the principle, as the money-lender said, ven he vouldn't renoo the bill.'"

"Washington Irving is *a great* fellow. We have laughed most heartily together. He is just the man he ought to be. So is Doctor Channing, with whom I have had an interesting correspondence since I saw him last at Boston. Halleck is a merry little man. Bryant a sad one, and very reserved. Washington Allston the painter (who wrote 'Monaldi') is a fine specimen of a glorious old genius. Longfellow, whose volume of poems I have got for you, is a frank accomplished man as well as a fine writer, and will be in town 'next fall.' Tell Macready that I suspect prices here must have rather altered since his time. I paid our fortnight's bill here, last night. We have dined out every day (except when I was laid up with

a sore throat), and only had in all four bottles of wine. The bill was 70*l.* English!!!

"You will see, by my other letter, how we have been fêted and feasted; and how there is war to the knife about the international copyright; and how I *will* speak about it, and decline to be put down. . . .

"Oh for news from home! I think of your letters so full of heart and friendship, with perhaps a little scrawl of Charley's or Mamey's, lying at the bottom of the deep sea; * and am as full of sorrow as if they had once been living creatures.—Well! they *may* come, yet."

"I have the privilege of appearing on the floor of both houses here [Washington, 15th March, 1842], and go to them every day. They are very handsome and commodious. There is a great deal of bad speaking, but there are a great many very remarkable men, in the Legislature: such as John Quincy Adams, Clay, Preston, Calhoun, and others: with whom I need scarcely add I have been placed in the friendliest relations. Adams is a fine old fellow—seventy-six years old, but with most surprising vigour, memory, readiness, and pluck. Clay is perfectly enchanting; an irresistible man. There are some very noble specimens, too, out of the West. Splendid men to look at, hard to deceive, prompt to act, lions in energy, Crichtons in varied accomplishments, Indians in quickness of eye and gesture, Americans in affectionate and generous impulse. It would be difficult to exaggerate the nobility of some of these glorious fellows.

"When Clay retires, as he does this month, Preston will become the leader of the whig party. He so solemnly assures me that the international copyright shall and will be passed, that I almost begin to hope; and I shall be entitled to say, if it be, that I have brought it about. You have no idea how universal the discussion of its merits and demerits has become; or how eager for the change I have made a portion of the people.

"You remember what Webster was, in England. If you *could* but see him here! If you could only have seen him

* It was feared that the Caledonia, carrying the mail, was lost. His letters reached him by the Acadia, to which vessel the Caledonia's mail was transferred when, disabled, she returned to Cork.—Ed.

when he called on us the other day—feigning abstraction in the dreadful pressure of affairs of state; rubbing his forehead as one who was aweary of the world; and exhibiting a sublime caricature of Lord Burleigh. He is the only thoroughly unreal man I have seen on this side the ocean.

"I said I wouldn't write anything more concerning the American people, for two months. Second thoughts are best. I shall not change, and may as well speak out—to *you*. They are friendly, earnest, hospitable, kind, frank, very often accomplished, far less prejudiced than you would suppose, warm-hearted, fervent, and enthusiastic. They are chivalrous in their universal politeness to women, courteous, obliging, disinterested; and, when they conceive a perfect affection for a man (as I may venture to say of myself), entirely devoted to him. I have received thousands of people of all ranks and grades, and have never once been asked an offensive or unpolite question—except by Englishmen, who, when they have been 'located' here for some years, are worse than the devil in his blackest painting. The State is a parent to its people; has a parental care and watch over all poor children, women labouring of child, sick persons, and captives. The common men render you assistance in the streets, and would revolt from the offer of a piece of money. The desire to oblige is universal; and I have never once travelled in a public conveyance, without making some generous acquaintance whom I have been sorry to part from, and who has in many cases come on miles, to see us again. But I don't like the country. I would not live here, on any consideration. It goes against the grain with me. It would with you. I think it impossible, utterly impossible, for any Englishman to live here, and be happy. I have a confidence that I must be right, because I have everything, God knows, to lead me to the opposite conclusion: and yet I cannot resist coming to this one. As to the causes, they are too many to enter upon here. . . .

"One of two petitions for an international copyright which I brought here from American authors, with Irving at their head, has been presented to the House of Representatives. Clay retains the other for presentation to the Senate after I have left Washington. The presented one has been referred to a committee; the Speaker has nomi-

nated as its chairman Mr. Kennedy, member for Baltimore, who is himself an author and notoriously favourable to such a law; and I am going to assist him in his report."

The letters, from which I am now printing exactly as they were written, have claims, as mere literature, of an unusual kind. Unrivalled quickness of observation, the rare faculty of seizing out of a multitude of things the thing that is essential, the irresistible play of humour, such pathos as only humorists of this high order possess, and the unwearied, unforced vivacity of ever fresh, buoyant, bounding animal spirits, never found more natural, variously easy, or picturesque expression. Written amid such distraction, fatigue, and weariness as they describe, amid the jarring noises of hotels and streets, aboard steamers, on canal boats, and in log huts, there is not an erasure in them. Not external objects only, but feelings, reflections, and thoughts, are photographed into visible forms with the same unexampled ease. They borrow no help from the matters of which they treat. They would have given, to the subjects described, old acquaintance and engrossing interest if they had been about a people in the moon. Of the personal character at the same time self-portrayed, others, whose emotions it less vividly awakens, will judge more calmly and clearly than myself. Yet to myself only can it be known how small were the services of friendship that sufficed to rouse all the sensibilities of this beautiful and noble nature. Throughout our life-long intercourse it was the same. His keenness of discrimination failed him never excepting here, when it was lost in the limitless extent of his appreciation of all kindly things; and never did he receive what was meant for a benefit that he was not eager to return it a hundredfold. No man more truly generous ever lived.

"We left Baltimore last Thursday the twenty-fourth [March, 1842] at half-past eight in the morning, by railroad; and got to a place called York, about twelve. There we dined, and took a stage-coach for Harrisburg; twenty-five miles further. This stage-coach was like nothing so much as the body of one of the swings you see at a fair set upon four wheels and roofed and covered at the sides with painted canvas. There were twelve *inside!* I, thank

my stars, was on the box. The luggage was on the roof; among it, a good-sized dining-table, and a big rocking-chair. We also took up an intoxicated gentleman, who sat for ten miles between me and the coachman; and another intoxicated gentleman who got up behind, but in the course of a mile or two fell off without hurting himself, and was seen in the distant perspective reeling back to the grog-shop where we had found him. There were four horses to this land-ark, of course; but we did not perform the journey until half-past six o'clock that night. . . . The first half of the journey was tame enough, but the second lay through the valley of the Susquehanah (I think I spell it right, but I haven't that American Geography at hand) which is very beautiful. . . .

"I think I formerly made a casual remark to you touching the precocity of the youth of this country. When we changed horses on this journey I got down to stretch my legs, refresh myself with a glass of whiskey and water, and shake the wet off my great coat—for it was raining very heavily, and continued to do so, all night. Mounting on my seat again, I observed something lying on the roof of the coach, which I took to be a rather large fiddle in a brown bag. In the course of ten miles or so, however, I discovered that it had a pair of dirty shoes at one end, and a glazed cap at the other; and further observation demonstrated it to be a small boy, in a snuff-coloured coat, with his arms quite pinioned to his sides by deep forcing into his pockets. He was, I presume, a relative or friend of the coachman's, as he lay a-top of the luggage, with his face towards the rain; and, except when a change of position brought his shoes in contact with my hat, he appeared to be asleep. Sir, when we stopped to water the horses, about two miles from Harrisburg, this thing slowly upreared itself to the height of three foot eight, and fixing its eyes on me with a mingled expression of complacency, patronage, national independence, and sympathy for all outer barbarians and foreigners, said, in shrill piping accents, 'Well now, stranger, I guess you find this a'most like an English a'ternoon—hey?' It is unnecessary to add that I thirsted for his blood. . . .

"We had all next morning in Harrisburg, as the canal boat [for Pittsburg] was not to start until three o'clock in the afternoon. The officials called upon me before I

had finished breakfast; and as the town is the seat of the Pennsylvanian legislature, I went up to the capitol. I was very much interested in looking over a number of treaties made with the poor Indians, their signatures being rough drawings of the creatures or weapons they are called after; and the extraordinary drawing of these emblems, showing the queer, unused, shaky manner in which each man has held the pen, struck me very much.

"You know my small respect for our House of Commons. These local legislatures are too insufferably apish of mighty legislation, to be seen without bile; for which reason, and because a great crowd of senators and ladies had assembled in both houses to behold the inimitable, and had already begun to pour in upon him even in the secretary's private room, I went back to the hotel, with all speed. The members of both branches of the legislature followed me there, however, so we had to hold the usual levee before our half-past one o'clock dinner. We received a great number of them. Pretty nearly every man spat upon the carpet, as usual; and one blew his nose with his fingers—also on the carpet, which was a very neat one, the room given up to us being the private parlour of the landlord's wife. This has become so common since, however, that it scarcely seems worth mentioning. Please to observe that the gentleman in question was a member of the Senate, which answers (as they very often tell me) to our House of Lords.

"The innkeeper was the most attentive, civil, and obliging person I ever saw in my life. On being asked for his bill, he said there was no bill: the honour and pleasure, etc., being more than sufficient. I did not permit this, of course; and begged Mr. Q. to explain to him, that, travelling four strong, I could not hear of it on any account.

"And now I come to the Canal Boat. Bless your heart and soul, my dear fellow—if you could only see us on board the canal boat! Let me think, for a moment, at what time of the day or night I should best like you to see us. In the morning? Between five and six in the morning, shall I say? Well! you *would* like to see me, standing on the deck, fishing the dirty water out of the canal with a tin ladle chained to the boat by a long chain; pouring the same into a tin-basin (also chained up in like

manner); and scrubbing my face with the jack towel. At night, shall I say? I don't know that you *would* like to look into the cabin at night, only to see me lying on a temporary shelf exactly the width of this sheet of paper when it's open (*I measured it this morning*), with one man above me, and another below; and, in all, eight and twenty in a low cabin, which you can't stand upright in with your hat on. I don't think you would like to look in at breakfast time either, for then these shelves have only just been taken down and put away, and the atmosphere of the place is, as you may suppose, by no means fresh; though there *are* upon the table tea and coffee, and bread and butter, and salmon, and shad, and liver, and steak, and potatoes, and pickles, and ham, and pudding, and sausages; and three and thirty people sitting round it, eating and drinking; and savoury bottles of gin, and whiskey, and brandy, and rum, in the bar hard by; and seven and twenty out of the eight and twenty men, in foul linen, with yellow streams from half-chewed tobacco trickling down their chins. Perhaps the best time for you to take a peep would be the present: eleven o'clock in the forenoon; when the barber is at his shaving, and the gentlemen are lounging about the stove waiting for their turns, and not more than seventeen are spitting in concert, and two or three are walking overhead (lying down on the luggage every time the man at the helm calls 'Bridge!'), and I am writing this in the ladies' cabin, which is a part of the gentlemen's, and only screened off by a red curtain. Indeed it exactly resembles the dwarf's private apartment in a caravan at a fair; and the gentlemen, generally, represent the spectators at a penny-a-head. The place is just as clean and just as large as that caravan you and I were in at Greenwich Fair last past. Outside, it is exactly like any canal boat you have seen near the Regent's Park, or elsewhere.

"You never can conceive what the hawking and spitting is, the whole night through. Last night was the worst. *Upon my honour and word* I was obliged, this morning, to lay my fur-coat on the deck, and wipe the half dried flakes of spittle from it with my handkerchief: and the only surprise seemed to be, that I should consider it necessary to do so. When I turned in last night, I put it on a stool beside me, and there it lay, under a cross fire

from five men—three opposite; one above; and one below. I make no complaints, and show no disgust. I am looked upon as highly facetious at night, for I crack jokes with everybody near me until we fall asleep. I am considered very hardy in the morning, for I run up, bare-necked, and plunge my head into the half-frozen water, by half-past five o'clock. I am respected for my activity, inasmuch as I jump from the boat to the towing-path, and walk five or six miles before breakfast; keeping up with the horses all the time. In a word, they are quite astonished to find a sedentary Englishman roughing it so well, and taking so much exercise; and question me very much on that head. The greater part of the men will sit and shiver round the stove all day, rather than put one foot before the other. As to having a window open, that's not to be thought of. . . .

"The canal has run, for the most part, by the side of the Susquehanah and Iwanata rivers; and has been carried through tremendous obstacles. Yesterday, we crossed the mountain. This is done *by railroad*. . . . You dine at an inn upon the mountain; and, including the half hour allowed for the meal, are rather more than five hours performing this strange part of the journey. The people north and 'down east' have terrible legends of its danger; but they appear to be exceedingly careful, and don't go to work at all wildly. There are some queer precipices close to the rails, certainly; but every precaution is taken. I am inclined to think, that such difficulties, and such a vast work, will admit of.

"The scenery, before you reach the mountains, and when you are on them, and after you have left them, is very fine and grand; and the canal winds its way through some deep, sullen gorges, which, seen by moonlight, are very impressive: though immeasurably inferior to Glencoe, to whose terrors I have not seen the smallest *approach*. We have passed, both in the mountains and elsewhere, a great number of new settlements, and detached log-houses. Their utterly forlorn and miserable appearance baffles all description. I have not seen six cabins out of six hundred, where the windows have been whole. Old hats, old clothes, old boards, old fragments of blanket and paper, are stuffed into the broken glass; and their air is misery and desolation. It pains the eye to see the stumps of great trees

thickly strewed in every field of wheat; and never to lose the eternal swamp and dull morass, with hundreds of rotten trunks, of elm and pine and sycamore and logwood, steeped in its unwholesome water; where the frogs so croak at night that after dark there is an incessant sound as if millions of phantom teams, with bells, were travelling through the upper air, at an enormous distance off. It is quite an oppressive circumstance, too, to *come* upon great tracks, where settlers have been burning down the trees; and where their wounded bodies lie about, like those of murdered creatures; while here and there some charred and blackened giant rears two bare arms aloft, and seems to curse his enemies. The prettiest sight I have seen was yesterday, when we—on the heights of the mountain, and in a keen wind—looked down into a valley full of light and softness: catching glimpses of scattered cabins; children running to the doors; dogs bursting out to bark; pigs scampering home, like so many prodigal sons; families sitting out in their gardens; cows gazing upward, with a stupid indifference; men in their shirt-sleeves looking on at their unfinished houses, and planning work for to-morrow—and the train riding on, high above them, like a storm. But I know this is beautiful—very—very beautiful! . . .

"I told you of the many uses of the word 'fix.' I ask Mr. Q. on board a steamboat if breakfast be nearly ready, and he tells me yes he should think so, for when he was last below the steward was 'fixing the tables'—in other words, laying the cloth. When we have been writing, and I beg him (do you remember anything of my love of order, at this distance of time?) to collect our papers, he answers that he'll 'fix 'em presently.' So when a man's dressing he's 'fixing' himself, and when you put yourself under a doctor he 'fixes' you in no time. T'other night, before we came on board here, when I had ordered a bottle of mulled claret and waited some time for it, it was put on table with an apology from the landlord (a lieutenant-colonel) that 'he fear'd it wasn't fixed properly.' And here, on Saturday morning, a Western man, handing the potatoes to Mr. Q. at breakfast, enquired if he wouldn't take some of 'these fixings' with his meat. I remained as grave as a judge. I catch them looking at me sometimes, and feel that they think I don't take any notice. Politics

are very high here; dreadfully strong; handbills, denunciations, invectives, threats, and quarrels. The question is, who shall be the next President. The election comes off in *three years and a half* from this time."

He resumed his letter, "On board the steamboat from Pittsburg to Cincinnati, April the first, 1842. A very tremulous steamboat, which makes my hand shake. This morning, my dear friend, this very morning, which, passing by without bringing news from England, would have seen us on our way to St. Louis (via Cincinnati and Louisville) with sad hearts and dejected countenances, and the prospect of remaining for at least three weeks longer without any intelligence of those so inexpressibly dear to us—this very morning, bright and lucky morning that it was, a great packet was brought to our bedroom door, from HOME. How I have read and re-read your affectionate, hearty, interesting, funny, serious, delightful, and thoroughly Forsterian Columbia letter, I will not attempt to tell you; or how glad I am that you liked my first; or how afraid I am that my second was not written in such good spirits as it should have been; or how glad I am again to think that my third *was;* or how I hope you will find some amusement from my fourth: this present missive. All this, and more affectionate and earnest words than the post-office would convey at any price, though they have no sharp edges to hurt the stamping-clerk—you will understand, I know, without expression, or attempt at expression. So having got over the first agitation of so much pleasure; and having walked the deck; and being now in the cabin, where one party are playing at chess, and another party are asleep, and another are talking round the stove, and all are spitting; and a persevering bore of a horrible New Englander with a droning voice like a gigantic bee *will* sit down beside me, though I am writing, and talk incessantly, in my very ear, to Kate—here goes again.

"Let me see. I should tell you, first, that we got to Pittsburg between eight and nine o'clock of the evening of the day on which I left off at the top of this sheet; and were there received by a little man (a very little man) whom I knew years ago in London. He rejoiceth in the name of D. G.; and, when I knew him, was in partnership with his father on the stock-exchange, and lived hand-

somely at Dalston. They failed in business soon afterwards, and then this little man began to turn to account what had previously been his amusement and accomplishment, by painting little subjects for the fancy shops. So I lost sight of him, nearly ten years ago; and here he turned up t'other day, as a portrait painter in Pittsburg! He had previously written me a letter which moved me a good deal, by a kind of quiet independence and contentment it breathed, and still a painful sense of being alone, so very far from home. I received it in Philadelphia, and answered it. He dined with us every day of our stay in Pittsburg (they were only three), and was truly gratified and delighted to find me unchanged—more so than I can tell you. I am very glad to-night to think how much happiness we have fortunately been able to give him.

"Pittsburg is like Birmingham—at least its townsfolks say so; and I didn't contradict them. It is, in one respect. There is a great deal of smoke in it. I quite offended a man at our yesterday's levee, who supposed I was 'not quite at home,' by telling him that the notion of London being so dark a place was a popular mistake. We had very queer customers at our receptions, I do assure you. Not least among them, a gentleman with his inexpressibles imperfectly buttoned and his waistband resting on his thighs, who stood behind the half-opened door, and could by no temptation or inducement be prevailed upon to come out. There was also another gentleman, with one eye and one fixed gooseberry, who stood in a corner motionless like an eight-day clock, and glared upon me, as I courteously received the Pittsburgians. There were also two red-headed brothers—boys—young dragons rather—who hovered about Kate, and wouldn't go. A great crowd they were, for three days; and a very queer one."

"Still in the same Boat. *April the Second*, 1842.

"We have a better cabin here than we had on board the Britannia; the berths being much wider, and the den having two doors: one opening on the ladies' cabin, and one upon a little gallery in the stern of the boat. We expect to be at Cincinnati some time on Monday morning, and we carry about fifty passengers. The cabin for meals goes right through the boat, from the prow to the stern, and is very long; only a small portion of it being divided

off, by a partition of wood and ground-glass, for the ladies. We breakfast at half after seven, dine at one, and sup at six. Nobody will sit down to any one of these meals, though the dishes are smoking on the board, until the ladies have appeared, and taken their chairs. It was the same in the canal boat.

"The washing department is a little more civilised than it was on the canal, but bad is the best. Indeed the Americans when they are travelling, as Miss Martineau seems disposed to admit, are exceedingly negligent: not to say dirty. To the best of my making out, the ladies, under most circumstances, are content with smearing their hands and faces in a very small quantity of water. So are the men; who superadd to that mode of ablution a hasty use of the common brush and comb. It is quite a practice, too, to wear but one cotton shirt a week, and three or four fine linen *fronts*. Anne reports that this is Mr. Q.'s course of proceeding: and my portrait-painting friend told me that it was the case with pretty nearly all his sitters; so that when he bought a piece of cloth not long ago and instructed the sempstress to make it *all* into shirts, not fronts, she thought him deranged.

"My friend the New Englander, of whom I wrote last night, is perhaps the most intolerable bore on this vast continent. He drones, and snuffles, and writes poems, and talks small philosophy and metaphysics, and never *will* be quiet, under any circumstances. He is going to a great temperance convention at Cincinnati; along with a doctor of whom I saw something at Pittsburg. The doctor, in addition to being everything that the New Englander is, is a phrenologist besides. I dodge them about the boat. Whenever I appear on deck, I see them bearing down upon me—and fly. The New Englander was very anxious last night that he and I should 'form a magnetic chain,' and magnetise the doctor, for the benefit of all incredulous passengers; but I declined, on the plea of tremendous occupation in the way of letter-writing.

"And speaking of magnetism, let me tell you that the other night at Pittsburg, there being present only Mr. Q. and the portrait-painter, Kate sat down, laughing, for me to try my hand upon her. I had been holding forth upon the subject rather luminously, and asserting that I thought I could exercise the influence, but had never tried. In

six minutes, I magnetised her into hysterics, and then into the magnetic sleep. I tried again next night, and she fell into the slumber in little more than two minutes. . . . I can wake her with perfect ease; but I confess (not being prepared for anything so sudden and complete) I was on the first occasion rather alarmed. . . . The Western parts being sometimes hazardous, I have fitted out the whole of my little company with LIFE PRESERVERS, which I inflate with great solemnity when we get aboard any boat, and keep, as Mrs. Cluppins did her umbrella in the court of common pleas, ready for use upon a moment's notice." . . .

He resumed his letter, on "Sunday, April the third," with allusion to a general who had called upon him in Washington with two literary ladies, and had written to him next day for an immediate interview, as "the two LL's" were ambitious of the honour of a personal introduction. "Besides the doctor and the dread New Englander, we have on board that valiant general who wrote to me about the 'two LL's.' He is an old, old man with a weazen face, and the remains of a pigeon-breast in his military surtout. He is acutely gentlemanly and officer-like. The breast has so subsided, and the face has become so strongly marked, that he seems, like a pigeon-pie, to show only the feet of the bird outside, and to keep the rest to himself. He is perhaps *the* most horrible bore in this country. And I am quite serious when I say that I do not believe there are, on the whole earth besides, so many intensified bores as in these United States. No man can form an adequate idea of the real meaning of the word, without coming here. There are no particular characters on board, with these three exceptions. Indeed I seldom see the passengers but at meal-times, as I read and write in our own little state room. . . . I have smuggled two chairs into our crib; and write this on a book upon my knee. Everything is in the neatest order, of course; and my shaving tackle, dressing case, brushes, books, and papers, are arranged with as much precision as if we were going to remain here a month. Thank God we are not.

"The average width of the river rather exceeds that of the Thames at Greenwich. In parts it is much broader; and then there is usually a green island, covered with trees, dividing it into two streams. Occasionally we stop for a

few minutes at a small town, or village (I ought to say city, everything is a city here); but the banks are for the most part deep solitudes, overgrown with trees, which, in these western latitudes, are already in leaf and very green. . . .

"All this I see, as I write, from the little door into the stern-gallery which I mentioned just now. It don't happen six times in a day that any other passenger comes near it; and, as the weather is amply warm enough to admit of our sitting with it open, here we remain from morning until night: reading, writing, talking. What our theme of conversation is, I need not tell you. No beauty or variety makes us weary less for home. We count the days, and say, 'When May comes, and we can say—*next month*—the time will seem almost gone.' We are never tired of imagining what you are all about. I allow of no calculation for the difference of clocks, but insist on a corresponding minute in London. It is much the shortest way, and best. . . . Yesterday, we drank your health and many happy returns—in wine, after dinner; in a small milk-pot jug of gin-punch, at night. And when I made a temporary table, to hold the little candlestick, of one of my dressing-case trays; cunningly inserted under the mattress of my berth with a weight a-top of it to keep it in its place, so that it made a perfectly exquisite bracket: we agreed, that, please God, this should be a joke at the Star and Garter on the second of April eighteen hundred and forty-three. If your blank *can* be surpassed . . . believe me ours transcends it. My heart gets, sometimes, SORE for home.

"At Pittsburg I saw another solitary confinement prison.* A horrible thought occurred to me when I was recalling all I had seen, that night. *What if ghosts be one of the terrors of the jails?* I have pondered on it often, since then. The utter solitude by day and night: the many hours of darkness; the silence of death; the mind for ever brooding on melancholy themes, and having no relief; sometimes an evil conscience very busy: imagine a prisoner covering up his head in the bedclothes and looking out from time to time, with a ghastly dread of some inexplicable silent figure that always sits upon his bed, or stands (if a thing can be said to stand, that never

* After seeing the Eastern Penitentiary at Philadelphia.—ED.

walks as men do) in the same corner of his cell. The more I think of it, the more certain I feel that not a few of these men (during a portion of their imprisonment at least) are nightly visited by spectres. I did ask one man in this last jail if he dreamed much. He gave me a most extraordinary look, and said—under his breath—in a whisper—'No.'"

"CINCINNATI. *Fourth April*, 1842.

"We arrived here this morning: about three o'clock, I believe, but I was fast asleep in my berth. I turned out soon after six, dressed, and breakfasted on board. About half after eight, we came ashore and drove to the hotel, to which we had written on from Pittsburg ordering rooms; and which is within a stone's throw of the boat wharf. Before I had issued an official notification that we were 'not at home,' two judges called, on the part of the inhabitants, to know when we would receive the towns-people. We appointed to-morrow morning, from half-past eleven to one; arranged to go out, with these two gentlemen, to see the town, *at* one; and were fixed for an evening party to-morrow night at the house of one of them. On Wednesday morning we go on by the mail-boat to Louisville, a trip of fourteen hours; and from that place proceed in the next good boat to St. Louis, which is a voyage of four days. Finding from my judicial friends (well-informed and most agreeable gentlemen) this morning, that the prairie travel to Chicago is a very fatiguing one, and that the lakes are stormy, sea-sicky, and not over-safe at this season, I wrote by our captain to St. Louis (for the boat that brought us here goes on there), to the effect that I should not take the lake route, but should come back here; and should visit the prairies, which are within thirty miles of St. Louis, immediately on my arrival there. . . .

"I have walked to the window, since I turned this page, to see what aspect the town wears. We are in a wide street: paved in the carriage way with small white stones, and in the footway with small red tiles. The houses are for the most part one story high; some are of wood; others of a clean white brick. Nearly all have green blinds outside every window. The principal shops over the way, are, according to the inscriptions over them, a Large Bread

Bakery; a Book Bindery; a Dry Goods Store; and a Carriage Repository; the last-named establishment looking very like an exceedingly small retail coal-shed. On the pavement under our window, a black man is chopping wood; and another black man is talking (confidentially) to a pig. The public table, at this hotel and at the hotel opposite, has just now finished dinner. The diners are collected on the pavement, on both sides of the way, picking their teeth, and talking. The day being warm, some of them have brought chairs into the street. Some are on three chairs; some on two; and some, in defiance of all known laws of gravity, are sitting quite comfortably on one: with three of the chair's legs, and their own two, high up in the air. The loungers, underneath our window, are talking of a great Temperance convention which comes off here to-morrow. Others, about me. Others, about England."

The next letter describes his experiences in the Far West, his stay in St. Louis, his visit to a prairie, the return to Cincinnati, and, after a stage-coach ride from that city to Columbus, the travel thence to Sandusky, and so, by Lake Erie, to the Falls of Niagara.

"Cincinnati is only fifty years old, but is a very beautiful city: I think the prettiest place I have seen here, except Boston. It has risen out of the forest like an Arabian-night city; is well laid out; ornamented in the suburbs with pretty villas; and above all, for this is a very rare feature in America, has smooth turf-plots and well-kept gardens. There happened to be a great temperance festival; and the procession mustered under, and passed, our windows early in the morning. I suppose they were twenty thousand strong, at least. Some of the banners were quaint and odd enough. The ship-carpenters, for instance, displayed on one side of their flag, the good Ship Temperance in full sail; on the other, the Steamer Alcohol blowing up sky-high. The Irishmen had a portrait of Father Mathew, you may be sure. And Washington's broad lower jaw (by the by, Washington had not a pleasant face) figured in all parts of the ranks. In a kind of square at one outskirt of the city, they divided into bodies, and were addressed by different speakers. Drier speaking I never heard. I own that I felt quite

uncomfortable to think they could take the taste of it out of their mouths with nothing better than water.

"In the evening we went to a party at Judge Walker's, and were introduced to at least one hundred and fifty first-rate bores, separately and singly. I was required to sit down by the greater part of them, and talk! * In the

* A young lady's account of this party, written next morning, and quoted in one of the American memoirs of Dickens, enables us to contemplate his suffering from the point of view of those who inflicted it. "I went last evening to a party at Judge Walker's, given to the hero of the day. . . . When we reached the house Mr. Dickens had left the crowded rooms, and was in the hall with his wife, about taking his departure when we entered the door. We were introduced to him in our wrapping; and in the flurry and embarrassment of the meeting, one of the party dropped a parcel, containing shoes, gloves, etc. Mr. Dickens, stooping, gathered them up and restored them with a laughing remark, and we bounded upstairs to get our things off. Hastening down again, we found him with Mrs. Dickens seated upon a sofa, surrounded by a group of ladies; Judge Walker having requested him to delay his departure for a few moments, for the gratification of some tardy friends who had just arrived, ourselves among the number. Declining to re-enter the rooms where he had already taken leave of the guests, he had seated himself in the hall. He is young and handsome, has a mellow, beautiful eye, fine brow, and abundant hair. His mouth is large, and his smile so bright it seemed to shed light and happiness all about him. His manner is easy, negligent, but not elegant. His dress was foppish; in fact, he was overdressed, yet his garments were worn so easily they appeared to be a necessary part of him. (!) He had a dark coat, with lighter pantaloons; a black waistcoat, embroidered with coloured flowers; and about his neck, covering his white shirt-front, was a black neck-cloth, also embroidered in colours, in which were placed two large diamond pins connected by a chain. A gold watch-chain, and a large red rose in his button-hole, completed his toilet. He appeared a little weary, but answered the remarks made to him—for he originated none—in an agreeable manner. Mr. Beard's portrait of Fagin was so placed in the room that we could see it from where we stood surrounding him. One of the ladies asked him if it was his idea of the Jew. He replied, 'Very nearly.' Another laughingly requested that he would give her the rose he wore, as a memento. He shook his head and said: 'That will not do; he could not give it to one; the others would be jealous.' A half dozen then insisted on having it, whereupon he proposed to divide the leaves among them. In taking the rose from his coat, either by design or accident, the leaves loosened and fell upon the floor, and amid considerable laughter the ladies stooped and gathered them. He remained some twenty minutes perhaps in the hall, and then took his leave. I must confess to considerable disappointment in the personal (*sic*) of my idol. I felt that his throne was shaken, although it never could be destroyed." This appalling picture supplements and sufficiently explains the mournful passage in the text.

night we were serenaded (as we usually are in every place we come to), and very well serenaded, I assure you. But we were very much knocked up. I really think my face has acquired a fixed expression of sadness from the constant and unmitigated boring I endure. The LL's have carried away all my cheerfulness. There is a line in my chin (on the right side of the under-lip), indelibly fixed there by the New-Englander I told you of in my last. I have the print of a crow's foot on the outside of my left eye, which I attribute to the literary characters of small towns. A dimple has vanished from my cheek, which I felt myself robbed of at the time by a wise legislator. But on the other hand I am really indebted for a good broad grin to P. E., literary critic of Philadelphia, and sole proprietor of the English language in its grammatical and idiomatical purity; to P. E., with the shiny straight hair and turned-down shirt-collar, who taketh all of us English men of letters to task in print, roundly and uncompromisingly, but told me at the same time that I had 'awakened a new era' in his mind. . . .

"The last 200 miles of the voyage from Cincinnati to St. Louis are upon the Mississippi, for you come down the Ohio to its mouth. It is well for society that this Mississippi, the renowned father of waters, had no children who take after him. It is the beastliest river in the world. . . .

"Conceive the pleasure of rushing down this stream by night (as we did last night) at the rate of fifteen miles an hour; striking against floating blocks of timber every instant; and dreading some infernal blow at every bump. The helmsman in these boats is in a little glass-house upon the roof. In the Mississippi, another man stands in the very head of the vessel, listening and watching intently; listening, because they can tell in dark nights by the noise when any great obstruction is at hand. This man holds the rope of a large bell which hangs close to the wheel-house, and whenever he pulls it, the engine is to stop directly, and not to stir until he rings again. Last night, this bell rang at least once in every five minutes; and at each alarm there was a concussion which nearly flung one out of bed. . . . While I have been writing this account, we have shot out of that hideous river, thanks be to God; never to see it again, I hope, but in a nightmare. We are now

on the smooth Ohio, and the change is like the transition from pain to perfect ease.

"We had a very crowded levee in St. Louis. Of course the paper had an account of it. If I were to drop a letter in the street, it would be in the newspaper next day, and nobody would think its publication an outrage. The editor objected to my hair, as not curling sufficiently. He admitted an eye; but objected again to dress, as being somewhat foppish, 'and indeed perhaps rather flash.—But such,' he benevolently adds, 'are the differences between American and English taste—rendered more apparent, perhaps, by all the other gentlemen present being dressed in black.' Oh, that you could have seen the other gentlemen! . . .

"A St. Louis lady complimented Kate upon her voice and manner of speaking, assuring her that she should never have suspected her of being Scotch, or even English. She was so obliging as to add that she would have taken her for an American, anywhere: which she (Kate) was no doubt aware was a very great compliment, as the Americans were admitted on all hands to have greatly refined upon the English language! I need not tell you that out of Boston and New York a nasal drawl is universal, but I may as well hint that the prevailing grammar is also more than doubtful; that the oddest vulgarisms are received idioms; that all the women who have been bred in slave States speak more or less like negroes, from having been constantly in their childhood with black nurses; and that the most fashionable and aristocratic (these are two words in great use), instead of asking you in what place you were born, enquire where you 'hail from'!!

"Lord Ashburton arrived at Annapolis t'other day, after a voyage of forty odd days in heavy weather. Straightway the newspapers state, on the authority of a correspondent who 'rowed round the ship' (I leave you to fancy her condition), that America need fear no superiority from England, in respect of her wooden walls. The same correspondent is 'quite pleased' with the frank manner of the English officers; and patronises them as being, for John Bulls, quite refined. My face, like Haji Baba's, turns upside down, and my liver is changed to water, when I come upon such things, and think who writes and who read them." . . .

"About the Prairie. . . . Tuesday the 12th [April, 1842] was the day fixed; and we were to start at five in the morning—sharp. I turned out at four; shaved and dressed; got some bread and milk; and throwing up the window, looked down into the street. Deuce a coach was there, nor did anybody seem to be stirring in the house. I waited until half-past five; but no preparations being visible even then, I left Mr. Q. to look out, and lay down upon the bed again. There I slept until nearly seven, when I was called. . . . Exclusive of Mr. Q. and myself, there were twelve of my committee in the party: all lawyers except one. He was an intelligent, mild, well-informed gentleman of my own age—the Unitarian minister of the place. With him, and two other companions, I got into the first coach. . . .

"We halted at so good an inn at Lebanon that we resolved to return there at night, if possible. One would scarcely find a better village alehouse of a homely kind in England. During our halt I walked into the village, and met a *dwelling-house* coming down-hill at a good round trot, drawn by some twenty oxen! We resumed our journey as soon as possible, and got upon the looking-glass prairie at sunset. We halted near a solitary log-house for the sake of its water; unpacked the baskets; formed an encampment with the carriages; and dined.

"Now, a prairie is undoubtedly worth seeing—but more that one may say one has seen it, than for any sublimity it possesses in itself. Like most things, great or small, in this country, you hear of it with considerable exaggerations. Basil Hall was really quite right in depreciating the general character of the scenery. The widely-famed Far West is not to be compared with even the tamest portions of Scotland or Wales. You stand upon the prairie, and see the unbroken horizon all round you. You are on a great plain, which is like a sea without water. I am exceedingly fond of wild and lonely scenery, and believe that I have the faculty of being as much impressed by it as any man living. But the prairie fell, by far, short of my preconceived idea. I felt no such emotions as I do in crossing Salisbury Plain. The excessive flatness of the scene makes it dreary, but tame. Grandeur is certainly not its characteristic. I retired from the rest of the party, to understand my own feelings the better;

and looked all round, again and again. It was fine. It was worth the ride. The sun was going down, very red and bright; and the prospect looked like that ruddy sketch of Catlin's, which attracted our attention (you remember?); except that there was not so much ground as he represents, between the spectator and the horizon. But to say (as the fashion is, here) that the sight is a landmark in one's existence, and awakens a new set of sensations, is sheer gammon. I would say to every man who can't see a prairie—go to Salisbury Plain, Marlborough Downs, or any of the broad, high, open lands near the sea. Many of them are fully as impressive; and Salisbury Plain is *decidedly* more so.

"We had brought roast fowls, buffalo's tongue, ham, bread, cheese, butter, biscuits, sherry, champagne, lemons and sugar for punch, and abundance of ice. It was a delicious meal: and as they were most anxious that I should be pleased, I warmed myself into a state of surpassing jollity; proposed toasts from the coach-box (which was the chair); ate and drank with the best; and made, I believe, an excellent companion to a very friendly companionable party. In an hour or so, we packed up, and drove back to the inn at Lebanon. While supper was preparing, I took a pleasant walk with my Unitarian friend; and when it was over (we drank nothing with it but tea and coffee) we went to bed. The clergyman and I had an exquisitely clean little chamber of our own: and the rest of the party were quartered overhead. . . .

"We got back to St. Louis soon after twelve at noon; and I rested during the remainder of the day. The soirée came off at night, in a very good ball-room at our inn—the Planter's House. The whole of the guests were introduced to us, singly. We were glad enough, you may believe, to come away at midnight; and were very tired. Yesterday, I wore a blouse. To-day, a fur-coat. Trying changes!"

"In the same Boat. *Sunday, Sixteenth April*, 1842.

"The inns in these outlandish corners of the world would astonish you by their goodness. The Planter's House is as large as the Middlesex Hospital and built very much on our hospital plan, with long wards abundantly ventilated, and plain white-washed walls. They had a

famous notion of sending up at breakfast-time large glasses of new milk with blocks of ice in them as clear as crystal. Our table was abundantly supplied indeed at every meal. One day when Kate and I were dining alone together, in our own room, we counted sixteen dishes on the table at the same time.

"The society is pretty rough, and intolerably conceited. All the inhabitants are young. *I didn't see one grey head in St. Louis.* There is an island close by, called bloody island. It is the duelling ground of St. Louis; and is so called from the last fatal duel which was fought there. It was a pistol duel, breast to breast, and both parties fell dead at the same time. One of our prairie party (a young man) had acted there as second in several encounters. The last occasion was a duel with rifles, at forty paces; and coming home he told us how he had bought his man a coat of green linen to fight in, woollen being usually fatal to rifle wounds. Prairie is variously called (on the refinement principle I suppose) Paraarer; parearer; and paroarer. I am afraid, my dear fellow, you will have had great difficulty in reading all the foregoing text. I have written it, very laboriously, on my knee; and the engine throbs and starts as if the boat were possessed with a devil."

"SANDUSKY. *Sunday, Twenty-fourth April,* 1842.

"We went ashore at Louisville this night week, where I left off, two lines above; and slept at the hotel, in which we had put up before. The Messenger being abominably slow, we got our luggage out next morning, and started on again at eleven o'clock in the Benjamin Franklin mail boat: a splendid vessel with a cabin more than two hundred feet long, and little state-rooms affording proportionate conveniences. She got in at Cincinnati by one o'clock next morning, when we landed in the dark and went back to our old hotel. As we made our way on foot over the broken pavement, Anne measured her length upon the ground, but didn't hurt herself. I say nothing of Kate's troubles—but you recollect her propensity? She falls into, or out of, every coach or boat we enter; scrapes the skin off her legs; brings great sores and swellings on her feet; chips large fragments out of her ankle-bones; and makes herself blue with bruises. She really has, however, since

we got over the first trial of being among circumstances so new and so fatiguing, made a *most admirable* traveller in every respect. She has never screamed or expressed alarm under circumstances that would have fully justified her in doing so, even in my eyes; has never given way to despondency or fatigue, though we have now been travelling incessantly, through a very rough country, for more than a month, and have been at times, as you may readily suppose, most thoroughly tired; has always accommodated herself, well and cheerfully, to everything; and has pleased me very much, and proved herself perfectly game.

"We remained at Cincinnati, all Tuesday the nineteenth, and all that night. At eight o'clock on Wednesday morning the twentieth, we left in the mail stage for Columbus: Anne, Kate, and Mr. Q. inside; I on the box. The distance is a hundred and twenty miles; the road macadamised; and for an American road, very good. We were three and twenty hours performing the journey. We travelled all night; reached Columbus at seven in the morning; breakfasted; and went to bed until dinner time. At night we held a levee for half an hour, and the people poured in as they always do: each gentleman with a lady on each arm, exactly like the Chorus to God Save the Queen. I wish you could see them, that you might know what a splendid comparison this is. They wear their clothes, precisely as the chorus people do; and stand—supposing Kate and me to be in the centre of the stage, with our backs to the footlights—just as the company would, on the first night of the season. They shake hands exactly after the manner of the guests at a ball at the Adelphi or the Haymarket; receive any facetiousness on my part, as if there were a stage direction 'all laugh'; and have rather more difficulty in 'getting off' than the last gentlemen, in white pantaloons, polished boots, and berlins, usually display, under the most trying circumstances.

"Next morning, that is to say on Friday the 22nd at seven o'clock exactly, we resumed our journey. The stage from Columbus to this place only running thrice a week, and not on that day, I bargained for an 'exclusive extra' with four horses, for which I paid forty dollars, or eight pounds English: the horses changing, as they would if it were the regular stage. To ensure our getting on properly,

the proprietors sent an agent on the box; and, with no other company but him and a hamper full of eatables and drinkables, we went upon our way. It is impossible to convey an adequate idea to you of the kind of road over which we travelled. I can only say that it was, at the best, but a track through the wild forest, and among the swamps, bogs, and morasses of the withered bush. A great portion of it was what is called a 'corduroy road': which is made by throwing round logs or whole trees into a swamp, and leaving them to settle there. Good Heaven! if you only felt one of the least of the jolts with which the coach falls from log to log! It is like nothing but going up a steep flight of stairs in an omnibus. Now the coach flung us in a heap on its floor, and now crushed our heads against its roof. Now one side of it was deep in the mire, and we were holding on to the other. Now it was lying on the horses' tails, and now again upon its own back. But it never, never, was in any position, attitude, or kind of motion to which we are accustomed in coaches; or made the smallest approach to our experience of the proceedings of any sort of vehicle that goes on wheels. Still, the day was beautiful, the air delicious, and we were *alone*: with no tobacco spittle, or eternal prosy conversation about dollars and politics (the only two subjects they ever converse about, or can converse upon) to bore us. We really enjoyed it; made a joke of the being knocked about; and were quite merry. At two o'clock we stopped in the wood to open our hamper and dine; and we drank to our darlings and all friends at home. Then we started again and went on until ten o'clock at night: when we reached a place called Lower Sandusky, sixty-two miles from our starting point. The last three hours of the journey were not very pleasant, for it lightened—awfully: every flash very vivid, very blue, and very long: and, the wood being so dense that the branches on *either* side of the track rattled and broke *against* the coach, it was rather a dangerous neighbourhood for a thunder storm.

"The inn at which we halted was a rough log-house. The people were all abed, and we had to knock them up. We had the queerest sleeping room, with two doors, one opposite the other; both opening directly on the wild black country, and neither having any lock or bolt. The effect of these opposite doors was, that one was always blowing

the other open: an ingenuity in the art of building, which I don't remember to have met with before. You should have seen me, in my shirt, blockading them with portmanteaus, and desperately endeavouring to make the room tidy! But the blockading was really needful, for in my dressing case I have about 250*l.* in gold; and for the amount of the middle figure in that scarce metal, there are not a few men in the West who would murder their fathers. Apropos of this golden store, consider at your leisure the strange state of things in this country. It has no money; really *no money*. The bank paper won't pass; the newspapers are full of advertisements from tradesmen who sell by barter; and American gold is not to be had, or purchased. I bought sovereigns, English sovereigns, at first: but as I could get none of them at Cincinnati to this day, I have had to purchase French gold; 20-franc pieces; with which I am travelling as if I were in Paris!

"But let's go back to Lower Sandusky. Mr. Q. went to bed up in the roof of the log-house somewhere, but was so beset by bugs that he got up after an hour and *lay in the coach* . . . where he was obliged to wait till breakfast time. We breakfasted, driver and all, in the one common room. It was papered with newspapers, and was as rough a place as need be. At half-past seven we started again, and we reached Sandusky at six o'clock yesterday afternoon. It is on Lake Erie, twenty-four hours' journey by steam boat from Buffalo. We found no boat here, nor has there been one, since. We are waiting, with every thing packed up, ready to start on the shortest notice; and are anxiously looking out for smoke in the distance.

"There was an old gentleman in the Log inn at Lower Sandusky who treats with the Indians on the part of the American government, and has just concluded a treaty with the Wyandot Indians at that place to remove next year to some land provided for them west of the Mississippi: a little way beyond St. Louis. He described his negociation to me, and their reluctance to go, exceedingly well. They are a fine people, but degraded and broken down. If you could see any of their men and women on a race-course in England, you would not know them from gipsies.

"We are in a small house here, but a very comfortable one, and the people are exceedingly obliging. Their

demeanour in these country parts is invariably morose, sullen, clownish, and repulsive. I should think there is not, on the face of the earth, a people so entirely destitute of humour, vivacity, or the capacity of enjoyment. It is most remarkable. I am quite serious when I say that I have not heard a hearty laugh these six weeks, except my own; nor have I seen a merry face on any shoulders but a black man's. Lounging listlessly about, idling in bar-rooms; smoking; spitting; and lolling on the pavement in rocking-chairs, outside the shop doors; are the only recreations. I don't think the national shrewdness extends beyond the Yankees; that is, the Eastern men. The rest are heavy, dull, and ignorant. Our landlord here is from the East. He is a handsome, obliging, civil fellow. He comes into the room with his hat on; spits in the fire place as he talks; sits down on the sofa with his hat on; pulls out his newspaper, and reads; but to all this I am accustomed. He is anxious to please—and that is enough." . . .

"*Tuesday, April Twenty-sixth*, 1842.

"NIAGARA FALLS! ! ! (UPON THE ENGLISH * SIDE).

"I don't know at what length I might have written you from Sandusky, my beloved friend, if a steamer had not come in sight just as I finished the last unintelligible sheet (oh! the ink in these parts!): whereupon I was obliged to pack up bag and baggage, to swallow a hasty apology for a dinner, and to hurry my train on board with all the speed I might. She was a fine steamship, four hundred tons burden, name the Constitution, had very few passengers on board, and had bountiful and handsome accommodation. It's all very fine talking about Lake Erie, but it won't do for persons who are liable to sea-sickness. We were all sick. It's almost as bad in that respect as the Atlantic. The waves are very short, and horribly constant. We reached Buffalo at six this morning; went ashore to breakfast; sent to the post-office forthwith; and received—oh! who or what can say with how much pleasure and what unspeakable delight!—our English letters!

"We lay all Sunday night, at a town (and a beautiful town too) called Cleveland; on Lake Erie. The people

* Ten dashes underneath English.

poured on board, in crowds, by six on Monday morning, to see me; and a party of 'gentlemen' actually planted themselves before our little cabin, and stared in at the door and windows *while I was washing, and Kate lay in bed.* I was so incensed at this, and at a certain newspaper published in that town which I had accidentally seen in Sandusky (advocating war with England to the death, saying that Britain must be 'whipped again,' and promising all true Americans that within two years they should sing Yankee-doodle in Hyde Park and Hail Columbia in the courts of Westminster), that when the mayor came on board to present himself to me, according to custom, I refused to see him, and bade Mr. Q. tell him why and wherefore. His honour took it very coolly, and retired to the top of the wharf, with a big stick and a whittling knife, with which he worked so lustily (staring at the closed door of our cabin all the time) that long before the boat left the big stick was no bigger than a cribbage peg!

"I never in my life was in such a state of excitement as coming from Buffalo here, this morning. You come by railroad; and are nigh two hours upon the way. I looked out for the spray, and listened for the roar, as far beyond the bounds of possibility, as though, landing in Liverpool, I were to listen for the music of your pleasant voice in Lincoln's Inn Fields. At last, when the train stopped, I saw two great white clouds rising up from the depths of the earth—nothing more. They rose up slowly, gently, majestically, into the air. I dragged Kate down a deep and slippery path leading to the ferry boat; bullied Anne for not coming fast enough; perspired at every pore; and felt, it is impossible to say how, as the sound grew louder and louder in my ears, and yet nothing could be seen for the mist.

"There were two English officers with us (ah! what *gentlemen*, what noblemen of nature they seemed), and they hurried off with me; leaving Kate and Anne on a crag of ice; and clambered after me over the rocks at the foot of the small Fall, while the ferryman was getting the boat ready. I was not disappointed—but I could make out nothing. In an instant, I was blinded by the spray, and wet to the skin. I saw the water tearing madly down from some immense height, but could get no idea of shape,

or situation, or anything but vague immensity. But when we were seated in the boat, and crossing at the very foot of the cataract—then I began to feel what it was. Directly I had changed my clothes at the inn I went out again taking Kate with me; and hurried to the Horse-shoe Fall I went down alone, into the very basin. It would be hard for a man to stand nearer God than he does there. There was a bright rainbow at my feet; and from that I looked up to—great Heaven! to *what* a fall of bright green water! The broad, deep, mighty stream seems to die in the act of falling; and, from its unfathomable grave arises that tremendous ghost of spray and mist which is never laid, and has been haunting this place with the same dread solemnity—perhaps from the creation of the world.

"We purpose remaining here a week. In my next, I will try to give you some idea of my impressions, and to tell you how they change with every day. At present it is impossible. I can only say that the first effect of this tremendous spectacle on me, was peace of mind—tranquillity—great thoughts of eternal rest and happiness—nothing of terror. I can shudder at the recollection of Glencoe (dear friend, with Heaven's leave we must see Glencoe together), but whenever I think of Niagara, I shall think of its beauty.

"If you could hear the roar that is in my ears as I write this. Both Falls are under our windows. From our sitting-room and bedroom we look down straight upon them. There is not a soul in the house but ourselves. What would I give if you and Mac were here, to share the sensations of this time! I was going to add, what would I give if the dear girl whose ashes lie in Kensal-green, had lived to come so far along with us—but she has been here many times, I doubt not, since her sweet face faded from my earthly sight.

"One word on the precious letters before I close. You are right, my dear fellow, about the papers; and you are right (I grieve to say) about the people. *Am I right?* quoth the conjuror. *Yes!* from gallery, pit, and boxes. I *did* let out those things, at first, against my will, but when I come to tell you all—well; only wait—only wait—till the end of July. I say no more.

"I do perceive a perplexingly divided and subdivided

duty, in the matter of the book of travels. Oh! the sublimated essence of comicality that I *could* distil, from the materials I have! . . . You are a part, and an essential part, of our home, dear friend, and I exhaust my imagination in picturing the circumstances under which I shall surprise you by walking into 58, Lincoln's Inn Fields. We are truly grateful to God for the health and happiness of our inexpressibly dear children and all our friends. But one letter more,—only one. . . . I don't seem to have been half affectionate enough, but there *are* thoughts, you know, that lie too deep for words."

"NIAGARA FALLS. *Tuesday, Third May*, 1842.

. . . "Nothing else occurring to me at this moment, let me give you the secretary's portrait. Shall I? He is of a sentimental turn—strongly sentimental; and tells Anne as June approaches that he hopes 'we shall sometimes think of him' in our own country. He wears a cloak, like Hamlet; and a very tall, big, limp, dusty black hat, which he exchanges on long journeys for a cap like Harlequin's. . . . He sings; and in some of our quarters, when his bedroom has been near ours, we have heard him grunting bass notes through the keyhole of his door, to attract our attention. His desire that I should formally ask him to sing, and his devices to make me do so, are irresistibly absurd. There was a piano in our room at Hartford (you recollect our being there, early in February?)—and he asked me one night, when we were alone, if 'Mrs. D.' played. 'Yes, Mr. Q.' 'Oh indeed, Sir! *I* sing: so whenever you want *a little soothing*—' You may imagine how hastily I left the room, on some false pretence, without hearing more.

"He paints. . . . An enormous box of oil colours is the main part of his luggage: and with these he blazes away, in his own room, for hours together. Anne got hold of some big-headed pot-bellied sketches he made of the passengers on board the canal-boat (including me in my fur-coat), the recollection of which brings the tears into my eyes at this minute. He painted the Falls, at Niagara, superbly; and is supposed now to be engaged on a full-length representation of me: waiters having reported that chamber-maids have said that there is a picture in his room which has a great deal of hair. One girl opined that

it was 'the beginning of the King's-arms'; but I am pretty sure the Lion is myself. . . .

"Sometimes, but not often, he commences a conversation. That usually occurs when we are walking the deck after dark; or when we are alone together in a coach. It is his practice at such times to relate the most notorious and patriarchal Joe Miller, as something that occurred in his own family. When travelling by coach, he is particularly fond of imitating cows and pigs; and nearly challenged a fellow-passenger the other day, who had been moved by the display of this accomplishment into telling him that he was 'a perfect calf.' He thinks it an indispensable act of politeness and attention to enquire constantly whether we're not sleepy, or, to use his own words, whether we don't 'suffer for sleep.' If we have taken a long nap of fourteen hours or so, after a long journey, he is sure to meet me at the bedroom door when I turn out in the morning, with this enquiry. But apart from the amusement he gives us, I could not by possibility have lighted on any one who would have suited my purpose so well. I have raised his ten dollars per month to twenty; and mean to make it up for six months."

"The Theatricals (I had been invited to play with the officers of the Coldstream guards here *) are, 'A Roland for an Oliver'; 'Two o'clock in the Morning'; and either 'The Young Widow,' or 'Deaf as a Post.' Ladies (unprofessional) are going to play, for the first time. I wrote to Mitchell at New York for a wig for Mr. Snobbington, which has arrived, and is brilliant. If they had done 'Love, Law and Physick,' as at first proposed, I was already 'up' in Flexible, having played it of old, before my authorship days; but if it should be Splash in 'The Young Widow,' you will have to do me the favour to imagine me in a smart livery-coat, shiny black hat and cockade, white knee-cords, white top-boots, blue stock, small whip, red cheeks and dark eyebrows."

His last letter, dated from "Peasco's Hotel, Montreal, Canada, twenty-sixth of May," described the private theatricals, and enclosed me a bill of the play.

* Montreal.—Ed.

Private Theatricals.

COMMITTEE.

MRS. TORRENS. | MRS. PERRY.
W. C. ERMATINGER, ESQ. | CAPTAIN TORRENS.
THE EARL OF MULGRAVE.

STAGE MANAGER—MR. CHARLES DICKENS.

QUEEN'S THEATRE, MONTREAL.

ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, MAY 25TH, 1842,

WILL BE PERFORMED,

A ROLAND FOR AN OLIVER.

MRS. SELBORNE.....*Mrs. Torrens.*
MARIA DARLINGTON.....*Miss Griffin.*
MRS. FIXTURE.....*Miss Ermatinger.*
MR. SELBORNE.....*Lord Mulgrave.*
ALFRED HIGHFLYER.....*Mr. Charles Dickens.*
SIR MARK CHASE.....*Honourable Mr. Methuen.*
FIXTURE.....*Captain Willoughby.*
GAMEKEEPER.....*Captain Granville.*

AFTER WHICH, AN INTERLUDE IN ONE SCENE, (FROM THE FRENCH,) CALLED

PAST TWO O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING.

THE STRANGER.....*Captain Granville.*
MR. SNOBBINGTON.....*Mr. Charles Dickens.*

TO CONCLUDE WITH THE FARCE, IN ONE ACT, ENTITLED

DEAF AS A POST.

MRS. PLUMPLEY.....*Mrs. Torrens.*
AMY TEMPLETON.....*Mrs. Charles Dickens!!!!!!!*
SOPHY WALTON.....*Mrs. Perry.*
SALLY MAGGS.....*Miss Griffin.*
CAPTAIN TEMPLETON.....*Captain Torrens.*
MR. WALTON.....*Captain Willoughby.*
TRISTRAM SAPPY.....*Doctor Griffin.*
CRUPPER.....*Lord Mulgrave.*
GALLOP.....*Mr. Charles Dickens.*

MONTREAL, May 24, 1842. GAZETTE OFFICE.

"The play came off last night. The audience, between five and six hundred strong, were invited as to a party; a regular table with refreshments being spread in the lobby and saloon. We had the band of the twenty-third (one of the finest in the service) in the orchestra, the theatre was lighted with gas, the scenery was excellent, and the properties were all brought from private houses. Sir Charles Bagot, Sir Richard Jackson, and their staffs were present; and as the military portion of the audience were all in full uniform, it was really a splendid scene.

"We 'went' also splendidly; though with nothing very remarkable in the acting way. We had for Sir Mark Chase a genuine odd fish, with plenty of humour; but our Tristram Sappy was not up to the marvellous reputation he has somehow or other acquired here. I am not, however, let me tell you, placarded as a stage-manager for nothing. Everybody was told they would have to submit to the most iron despotism; and didn't I come Macready over them? Oh no. By no means. Certainly not. The pains I have taken with them, and the perspiration I have expended, during the last ten days, exceed in amount anything you can imagine. I had regular plots of the scenery made out, and lists of the properties wanted; and had them nailed up by the prompter's chair. Every letter that was to be delivered, was written; every piece of money that had to be given, provided; and not a single thing lost sight of. I prompted, myself, when I was not on; when I was, I made the regular prompter of the theatre my deputy; and I never saw anything so perfectly touch and go, as the first two pieces. The bedroom scene in the interlude was as well furnished as Vestris had it; with a 'practicable' fireplace blazing away like mad, and everything in a concatenation accordingly. I really do believe that I was very funny: at least I know that I laughed heartily at myself, and made the part a character, such as you and I know very well: a mixture of T——, Harley, Yates, Keeley, and Jerry Sneak. It went with a roar, all through; and, as I am closing this, they have told me I was so well made up that Sir Charles Bagot, who sat in the stage-box, had no idea who played Mr. Snobbington, until the piece was over.

"But only think of Kate playing! and playing devilish well, I assure you! All the ladies were capital, and we

had no wait or hitch for an instant. You may suppose this, when I tell you that we began at eight, and had the curtain down at eleven. It is their custom here, to prevent heartburnings in a very heartburning town, whenever they have played in private, to repeat the performances in public. So, on Saturday (substituting, of course, real actresses for the ladies), we repeat the two first pieces to a paying audience, for the manager's benefit. . . .

"Oh home — home — home — home — home — home — HOME!!!!!!!!!!!"

X.

[In 1844–45 Dickens was in Italy. In the last week of September, 1844, he went to Genoa]. When it had all become familiar to him, he was fond of dilating on its beauties. I remember a vivid account he gave me of a great festa on the hill behind the house, when the people alternately danced under tents in the open air and rushed to say a prayer or two in an adjoining church bright with red and gold and blue and silver; so many minutes of dancing, and of praying, in regular turns of each. But the view over into Genoa, on clear bright days, was a never-failing enjoyment. The whole city then, without an atom of smoke, and with every possible variety of tower and steeple pointing up into the sky, lay stretched out below his windows. To the right and left were lofty hills, with every indentation in their rugged sides sharply discernible; and on one side of the harbour stretched away into the dim bright distance the whole of the Cornice, its first highest range of mountains hoary with snow. Sitting down one Spring day to write to me, he thus spoke of the sea and of the garden. "Beyond the town is the wide expanse of the Mediterranean, as blue, at this moment, as the most pure and vivid Prussian blue on Mac's palette when it is newly set; and on the horizon there is a red flush, seen nowhere as it is here. Immediately below the windows are the gardens of the house, with gold fish swimming and diving in the fountains; and below them, at the foot of a steep slope, the public garden and drive, where the walks are marked

out by hedges of pink roses, which blush and shine through the green trees and vines, close up to the balconies of these windows. No custom can impair, and no description enhance, the beauty of the scene."

Bent upon his work,* for which he never had been in more earnest mood, he was disturbed by hearing that he must attend the levee of the Governor, who had unexpectedly arrived in the city, and who would take it as an affront, his eccentric friend Fletcher told him, if that courtesy were not immediately paid. "It was the morning on which I was going to begin, so I wrote round to our consul"—praying, of course, that excuse should be made for him. Don't bother yourself, replied that sensible functionary, for all the consuls and governors alive; but shut yourself up by all means. "So," continues Dickens, "he went next morning in great state and full costume, to present two English gentlemen. 'Where's the great poet?' said the Governor. 'I want to see the great poet.' 'The great poet, your excellency,' said the consul, 'is at work, writing a book, and begged me to make his excuses.' 'Excuses!' said the Governor, 'I wouldn't interfere with such an occupation for all the world. Pray tell him that my house is open to the honour of his presence when it is perfectly convenient for him; but not otherwise. And let no gentleman,' said the Governor, a surweyin' of his suite with a majestic eye, 'call upon Signor Dickens till he is understood to be disengaged.' And he sent somebody with his own cards next day. Now I *do* seriously call this, real politeness and pleasant consideration—not positively American, but still gentlemanly and polished. The same spirit pervades the inferior departments; and I have not been required to observe the usual police regulations, or to put myself to the slightest trouble about anything."

Another incident of these days will exhibit aspirations of a more solemn import that were not less part of his nature. It was depth of sentiment rather than clearness of faith which kept safe the belief on which they rested against all doubt or question of its sacredness, but every year seemed to strengthen it in him. "Let me tell you," he wrote (30th of September), "of a curious dream I had,

* He was writing "The Chimes."—Ed.

last Monday night; and of the fragments of reality I can collect, which helped to make it up. I have had a return of rheumatism in my back, and knotted round my waist like a girdle of pain; and had lain awake nearly all that night under the infliction, when I fell asleep and dreamed this dream. Observe that throughout I was as real, animated, and full of passion as Macready (God bless him!) in the last scene of 'Macbeth.' In an indistinct place, which was quite sublime in its indistinctness, I was visited by a Spirit. I could not make out the face, nor do I recollect that I desired to do so. It wore a blue drapery, as the Madonna might in a picture by Raphael; and bore no resemblance to any one I have known except in stature. I think (but I am not sure) that I recognised the voice. Anyway, I knew it was poor Mary's spirit. I was not at all afraid, but in a great delight, so that I wept very much, and stretching out my arms to it called it 'Dear.' At this, I thought it recoiled; and I felt immediately, that not being of my gross nature, I ought not to have addressed it so familiarly. 'Forgive me!' I said. 'We poor living creatures are only able to express ourselves by looks and words. I have used the word most natural to *our* affections; and you know my heart.' It was so full of compassion and sorrow for me—which I knew spiritually, for, as I have said, I didn't perceive its emotions by its face—that it cut me to the heart; and I said, sobbing, 'Oh! give me some token that you have really visited me!' 'Form a wish,' it said. I thought, reasoning with myself: 'If I form a selfish wish, it will vanish.' So I hastily discarded such hopes and anxieties of my own as came into my mind, and said, 'Mrs. Hogarth is surrounded with great distresses'—observe, I never thought of saying 'your mother' as to a mortal creature—'will you extricate her?' 'Yes.' 'And her extrication is to be a certainty to me, that this has really happened?' 'Yes.' 'But answer me one other question!' I said, in an agony of entreaty lest it should leave me. 'What is the True religion?' As it paused a moment without replying, I said—Good God in such an agony of haste, lest it should go away!—'You think, as I do, that the Form of religion does not so greatly matter, if we try to do good? or,' I said, observing that it still hesitated, and was moved with the greatest compassion for me, perhaps

'the Roman Catholic is the best? perhaps it makes one think of God oftener, and believe in him more steadily?' 'For *you*,' said the Spirit, full of such heavenly tenderness for me, that I felt as if my heart would break; 'for *you*, it is the best!' Then I awoke, with the tears running down my face, and myself in exactly the condition of the dream. It was just dawn. I called up Kate, and repeated it three or four times over, that I might not unconsciously make it plainer or stronger afterwards. It was exactly this. Free from all hurry, nonsense, or confusion, whatever. Now, the strings I can gather up, leading to this, were three. The first you know, from the main subject of my last letter.* The second was, that there is a great altar in our bedroom, at which some family who once inhabited this palace had mass performed in old time: and I had observed within myself, before going to bed, that there was a mark in the wall, above the sanctuary, where a religious picture used to be; and I had wondered within myself what the subject might have been, *and what the face was like.* Thirdly, I had been listening to the convent bells (which ring at intervals in the night), and so had thought, no doubt, of Roman Catholic services. And yet, for all this, put the case of that wish being fulfilled by any agency in which I had no hand; and I wonder whether I should regard it as a dream, or an actual Vision!"

[Dickens writes vividly to Forster of Venetian glories]. "Nothing in the world that ever you have heard of Venice is equal to the magnificent and stupendous reality. The wildest visions of the Arabian Nights are nothing to the piazza of Saint Mark, and the first impression of the inside of the church. The gorgeous and wonderful reality of Venice is beyond the fancy of the wildest dreamer. Opium couldn't build such a place, and enchantment couldn't shadow it forth in a vision. All that I have heard of it, read of it in truth or fiction, fancied of it, is left thousands of miles behind. You know that I am liable to disappointment in such things from over-expectation, but Venice is above, beyond, out of all reach of coming near, the imagination of a man. It has never been rated high enough. It is a thing you would shed

* Relating to "The Chimes."—Ed.

tears to see. When I came *on board* here last night (after a five miles' row in a gondola; which somehow or other, I wasn't at all prepared for); when, from seeing the city lying, one light, upon the distant water, like a ship, I came plashing through the silent and deserted streets; I felt as if the houses were reality—the water, fever-madness. But when, in the bright, cold, bracing day, I stood upon the piazza this morning, by Heaven the glory of the place was insupportable! And diving down from that into its wickedness and gloom—its awful prisons, deep below the water; its judgment chambers, secret doors, deadly nooks, where the torches you carry with you blink as if they couldn't bear the air in which the frightful scenes were acted; and coming out again into the radiant, unsubstantial Magic of the town; and diving in again, into vast churches, and old tombs—a new sensation, a new memory, a new mind came upon me. Venice is a bit of my brain from this time. My dear Forster, if you could share my transports (as you would if you were here) what would I not give! I feel cruel not to have brought Kate and Georgy; positively cruel and base. Canaletti and Stanny, miraculous in their truth. Turner, very noble. But the reality itself, beyond all pen or pencil. I never saw the thing before that I should be afraid to describe. But to tell what Venice is, I feel to be an impossibility. And here I sit alone, writing it: with nothing to urge me on, or goad me to that estimate, which, speaking of it to anyone I loved, and being spoken to in return, would lead me to form. In the sober solitude of a famous inn; with the great bell of Saint Mark ringing twelve at my elbow; with three arched windows in my room (two stories high) looking down upon the grand canal and away, beyond, to where the sun went down to-night in a blaze; and thinking over again those silent speaking faces of Titian and Tintoretto; I swear (uncooled by any humbug I have seen) that Venice is *the* wonder and the new sensation of the world! If you could be set down in it, never having heard of it, it would still be so. With your foot upon its stones, its pictures before you, and its history in your mind, it is something past all writing of or speaking of—almost past all thinking of. You couldn't talk to me in this room, nor I to you, without shaking hands and saying 'Good God, my dear fellow, have we lived to see this!'"

. . . "It is a great thing—quite a matter of course—with English travellers, to decry the Italian inns. Of course you have no comforts that you are used to in England; and travelling alone, you dine in your bedroom always: which is opposed to our habits. But they are immeasurably better than you would suppose. The attendants are very quick; very punctual; and so obliging, if you speak to them politely, that you would be a beast not to look cheerful, and take everything pleasantly. I am writing this in a room like a room on the two-pair front of an unfinished house in Eaton Square: the very walls make me feel as if I were a bricklayer distinguished by Mr. Cubitt with the favour of having it to take care of. The windows won't open, and the doors won't shut; and these latter (a cat could get in, between them and the floor) have a windy command of a colonnade which is open to the night, so that my slippers positively blow off my feet, and make little circuits in the room—like leaves. There is a very ashy wood-fire, burning on an immense hearth which has no fender (there is no such thing in Italy); and it only knows two extremes—an agony of heat when wood is put on, and an agony of cold when it has been on two minutes. There is also an uncomfortable stain in the wall, where the fifth door (not being strictly indispensable) was walled up a year or two ago, and never painted over. But the bed is clean; and I have had an excellent dinner; and without being obsequious or servile, which is not at all the characteristic of the people in the North of Italy, the waiters are so amiably disposed to invent little attentions which they suppose to be English, and are so light-hearted and good-natured, that it is a pleasure to have to do with them. But so it is with all the people. Vetturino-travelling involves a stoppage of two hours in the middle of the day, to bait the horses. At that time I always walk on. If there are many turns in the road, I necessarily have to ask my way, very often: and the men are such gentlemen, and the women such ladies, that it is quite an interchange of courtesies."

Of the help his courier continued to be to him I had whimsical instances in almost every letter. He is an essential figure to two little scenes sketched for me at Lodi, and I may preface them by saying that Louis Roche, native of Avignon, justified to the close his master's high

opinion. He was again engaged for nearly a year in Switzerland, and soon after, poor fellow, though with a jovial robustness of look and breadth of chest that promised unusual length of days, was killed by heart-disease. "The brave C. continues to be a prodigy. He puts out my clothes at every inn as if I were going to stay there twelve months; calls me to the instant every morning; lights the fire before I get up; gets hold of roast fowls and produces them in coaches at a distance from all other help, in hungry moments; and is invaluable to me. He is such a good fellow, too, that little rewards don't spoil him. I always give him, after I have dined, a tumbler of Sauterne or Hermitage or whatever I may have; sometimes (as yesterday) when we have come to a public house at about eleven o'clock, very cold, having started before daybreak and had nothing, I make him take his breakfast with me; and this renders him only more anxious than ever, by redoubling attentions, to show me that he thinks he has got a good master. . . . I didn't tell you that the day before I left Genoa, we had a dinner-party—our English consul and his wife; the banker; Sir George Crawford and his wife; the De la Rues; Mr. Curry; and some others, fourteen in all. At about nine in the morning, two men in immense paper caps enquired at the door for the brave C., who presently introduced them in triumph as the Governor's cooks, his private friends, who had come to dress the dinner! Jane wouldn't stand this, however; so we were obliged to decline. Then there came, at half-hourly intervals, six gentlemen having the appearance of English clergymen, being other private friends who had come to wait. . . . We accepted *their* services; and you never saw anything so nicely and quietly done. He had asked, as a special distinction, to be allowed the supreme control of the dessert; and he had ices made like fruit, had pieces of crockery turned upside down so as to look like other pieces of crockery non-existent in this part of Europe, and carried a case of toothpicks in his pocket. Then his delight was, to get behind Kate at one end of the table, to look at me at the other, and to say to Georgy in a low voice whenever he handed her anything, 'What does master think of datter 'rangement? Is he cōntĕnt?' . . . If you could see what these fellows of couriers are when their families are not upon the move, you would

feel what a prize he is. I can't make out whether he was ever a smuggler, but nothing will induce him to give the custom-house officers anything: in consequence of which that portmanteau of mine has been unnecessarily opened twenty times. Two of them will come to the coach-door, at the gate of a town. 'Is there anything contraband in this carriage, signore?'—'No, no. There's nothing here. I am an Englishman, and this is my servant.' 'A buono mano signore?' 'Roche,' (in English) 'give him something, and get rid of him.' He sits unmoved. 'A buono mano signore?' 'Go along with you!' says the brave C. 'Signore, I am a custom-house officer!' 'Well, then, more shame for you!'—he always makes the same answer. And then he turns to me and says in English: while the custom-house officer's face is a portrait of anguish framed in the coach-window, from his intense desire to know what is being told to his disparagement: 'Datter chip,' shaking his fist at him, 'is greatest tief—and you know it you rascal—as never did en-razh me so, that I cannot bear myself!' I suppose chip to mean chap, but it may include the custom-house officer's father and have some reference to the old block, for anything I distinctly know."

[Dickens—January, 1845—had] a somewhat exciting dialogue with an old professional beggar at Radicofani, in which he was obliged to confess that he came off second-best. It transpired at a little town hanging on a hillside, of which the inhabitants, being all of them beggars, had the habit of swooping down, like so many birds of prey, upon any carriage that approached it.

"Can you imagine" (he named a first-rate bore, for whose name I shall substitute) "M. F. G. in a very frowsy brown cloak concealing his whole figure, and with very white hair and a very white beard, darting out of this place with a long staff in his hand, and begging? There he was, whether you can or not; out of breath with the rapidity of his dive, and staying with his staff all the Radicofani boys, that he might fight it out with me alone. It was very wet, and so was I: for I had kept, according to custom, my box-seat. It was blowing so hard that I could scarcely stand; and there was a custom-house on the spot, besides. Over and above all this, I had no small money; and the brave C. never has, when I want it for a

beggar. When I had excused myself several times, he suddenly drew himself up and said, with a wizard look (fancy the aggravation of M. F. G. as a wizard!), 'Do you know what you are doing, my lord? Do you mean to go on to-day?' 'Yes,' I said, 'I do.' 'My lord,' he said, 'do you know that your vetturino is unacquainted with this part of the country; that there is a wind raging on the mountain, which will sweep you away; that the courier, the coach, and all the passengers, were blown from the road last year; and that the danger is great and almost certain?' 'No,' I said, 'I don't.' 'My lord, you don't understand me, I think?' 'Yes I do, d—— you!' nettled by this (you feel it? I confess it). 'Speak to my servant. It's his business. Not mine'—for he really was too like M. F. G. to be borne. If you could have seen him!—'Santa Maria, these English lords! It's not their business if they're killed! They leave it to their servants!' He drew off the boys; whispered them to keep away from the heretic; and ran up the hill again, almost as fast as he had come down. He stopped at a little distance as we moved on; and pointing to Roche with his long staff cried loudly after me, 'It's *his* business if you're killed, is it, my lord? Ha! ha! ha! whose business is it when the English lords are born! Ha! ha! ha!' The boys taking it up in a shrill yell, I left the joke and them at this point. But I must confess that I thought he had the best of it. And he had so far reason for what he urged, that when we got on the mountain pass the wind became terrific, so that we were obliged to take Kate out of the carriage lest she should be blown over, carriage and all, and had ourselves to hang on to it, on the windy side, to prevent its going Heaven knows where!"

[Naples] he conceived the greatest dislike to. "The condition of the common people here is abject and shocking. I am afraid the conventional idea of the picturesque is associated with such misery and degradation that a new picturesque will have to be established as the world goes onward. Except Fondi there is nothing on earth that I have seen so dirty as Naples. I don't know what to liken the streets to where the mass of the lazzaroni live. You recollect that favourite pig-stye of mine near Broadstairs? They are more like streets of such apartments

heaped up story on story, and tumbled house on house, than anything else I can think of, at this moment." . . .

"What would I give that you should see the lazzaroni as they really are—mere squalid, abject, miserable animals for vermin to batten on; slouching, slinking, ugly, shabby, scavenging scarecrows! And oh the raffish counts and more than doubtful countesses, the noodles and the blacklegs, the good society! And oh the miles of miserable streets and wretched occupants, to which Saffron Hill or the Borough Mint is a kind of small gentility, which are found to be so picturesque by English lords and ladies; to whom the wretchedness left behind at home is lowest of the low, and vilest of the vile, and commonest of all common things. Well! well! I have often thought that one of the best chances of immortality for a writer is in the Death of his language, when he immediately becomes good company: and I often think here—What *would* you say to these people, milady and milord, if they spoke out of the homely dictionary of your own 'lower orders.'" He was at Rome on Sunday the second of March [1845].

Sad news from me as to a common and very dear friend awaited him there; but it is a subject on which I may not dwell farther than to say that there arose from it much to redeem even such a sorrow, and that this I could not indicate better than by these wise and tender words from Dickens. "No philosophy will bear these dreadful things, or make a moment's head against them, but the practical one of doing all the good we can, in thought and deed. While we can, God help us! ourselves stray from ourselves so easily; and there are all around us such frightful calamities besetting the world in which we live; nothing else will carry us through it. . . . What a comfort to reflect on what you tell me. Bulwer Lytton's conduct is that of a generous and noble-minded man, as I have ever thought him. Our dear good Procter too! And Thackeray—how earnest they have all been! I am very glad to find you making special mention of Charles Lever. I am glad over every name you write. It says something for our pursuit, in the midst of all its miserable disputes and jealousies, that the common impulse of its followers, in such an instance as this, is surely and certainly of the noblest."

He came home [from Italy] by the Great St. Gothard, and was quite carried away by what he saw of Switzerland. The country was so divine that he should have wondered indeed if its sons and daughters had ever been other than a patriotic people. Yet, infinitely above the country he had left as he ranked it in its natural splendours, there was something more enchanting than these that he lost in leaving Italy; and he expressed this delightfully in the letter from Lucerne (14th of June) which closes the narrative of his Italian life.

"We came over the St. Gothard, which has been open only eight days. The road is cut through the snow, and the carriage winds along a narrow path between two massive snow walls, twenty feet high or more. Vast plains of snow range up the mountain-sides above the road, itself seven thousand feet above the sea; and tremendous waterfalls, hewing out arches for themselves in the vast drifts, go thundering down from precipices into deep chasms, here and there and everywhere: the blue water tearing through the white snow with an awful beauty that is most sublime. The pass itself, the mere pass over the top, is not so fine, I think, as the Simplon; and there is no plain upon the summit, for the moment it is reached the descent begins. So that the loneliness and wildness of the Simplon are not equalled *there*. But being much higher, the ascent and the descent range over a much greater space of country; and on both sides there are places of terrible grandeur, unsurpassable, I should imagine, in the world. The Devil's Bridge, terrific! The whole descent between Andermatt (where we slept on Friday night) and Altdorf, William Tell's town, which we passed through yesterday afternoon, is the highest sublimation of all you can imagine in the way of Swiss scenery. Oh God! what a beautiful country it is! How poor and shrunken, beside it, is Italy in its brightest aspect!

"I look upon the coming down from the Great St. Gothard with a carriage and four horses and only one postilion, as the most dangerous thing that a carriage and horses can do. We had two great wooden logs for drags, and snapped them both like matches. The road is like a geometrical staircase, with horrible depths beneath it; and at every turn it is a toss-up, or seems to be, whether the leaders shall go round or over. The lives of the whole

party may depend upon a strap in the harness; and if we broke our rotten harness once yesterday, we broke it at least a dozen times. The difficulty of keeping the horses together in the continual and steep circle, is immense. They slip and slide, and get their legs over the traces, and are dragged up against the rocks; carriage, horses, harness, all a confused heap. The Brave, and I, and the postilion, were constantly at work, in extricating the whole concern from a tangle, like a skein of thread. We broke two thick iron chains, and crushed the box of a wheel, as it was; and the carriage is now undergoing repair, under the window, on the margin of the lake: where a woman in short petticoats, a stomacher, and two immensely long tails of black hair hanging down her back very nearly to her heels, is looking on—apparently dressed for a melodrama, but in reality a waitress at this establishment.

"If the Swiss villages looked beautiful to me in winter, their summer aspect is most charming: most fascinating: most delicious. Shut in by high mountains capped with perpetual snow; and dotting a rich carpet of the softest turf, overshadowed by great trees; they seem so many little havens of refuge from the troubles and miseries of great towns. The cleanliness of the little baby-houses of inns is wonderful to those who come from Italy. But the beautiful Italian manners, the sweet language, the quick recognition of a pleasant look or cheerful word; the captivating expression of a desire to oblige in everything; are left behind the Alps. Remembering them, I sigh for the dirt again: the brick floors, bare walls, unplastered ceilings, and broken windows."

We met at Brussels; Maclise, Jerrold, myself, and the travellers; passed a delightful week in Flanders together; and were in England at the close of June [1845].

XI.

What Might have Been is a history of too little profit to be worth anybody's writing, and here there is no call to regret how great an actor was in Dickens lost. He

took to a higher calling, but it included the lower. There was no character created by him into which life and reality were not thrown with such vividness, that to his readers the thing written did not seem the thing actually done, whether the form of disguise put on by the enchanter was Mrs. Gamp, Tom Pinch, Mr. Squeers, or Fagin the Jew. He had the power of projecting himself into shapes and suggestions of his fancy which is one of the marvels of creative imagination, and what he desired to express he became. The assumptions of the theatre have the same method at a lower pitch, depending greatly on personal accident; but the accident as much as the genius favoured Dickens, and another man's conception underwent in his acting the process which in writing he applied to his own. Into both he flung himself with the passionate fullness of his nature; and though the theatre had limits for him, and he was always greater in quickness of assumption than in steadiness of delineation, there was no limit to his delight and enjoyment in the adventures of our theatrical holiday.

In less than three weeks after his return we had selected our play, cast our parts, and all but engaged our theatre; as I find by a note from my friend of the 22nd of July, in which the good-natured laugh can give no offence now, since all who might have objected to it have long gone from us. Fanny Kelly, the friend of Charles Lamb, and a genuine successor to the old school of actresses in which the Mrs. Orgers and Miss Popes were bred, was not more delightful on the stage than impracticable when off, and the little theatre in Dean Street which the Duke of Devonshire's munificence had enabled her to build, and which with any ordinary good sense might handsomely have realised both its uses, as a private school for young actresses and a place of public amusement, was made useless for both by her mere whims and fancies. "Heavens! such a scene as I have had with Miss Kelly here, this morning! She wanted us put off until the theatre should be cleaned and brushed up a bit, and she would and she would not, for she is eager to have us and alarmed when she thinks of us. By the foot of Pharaoh, it was a great scene! Especially when she choked, and had the glass of water brought. She exaggerates the importance of our occupation, dreads the least prejudice against her establishment

in the minds of any of our company, says the place already has quite ruined her, and with tears in her eyes protests that any jokes at her additional expense in print would drive her mad. By the body of Cæsar, the scene was incredible! It's like a preposterous dream." Something of our play is disclosed by the oaths à la Bobadil, and of our actors by "the jokes" poor Miss Kelly was afraid of. We had chosen "Every Man in his Humour," with special regard to the singleness and individuality of the "humours" portrayed in it; and our company included the leaders of a journal then in its earliest years, but already not more renowned as the most successful joker of jokes yet known in England, than famous for that exclusive use of its laughter and satire for objects the highest or most harmless which makes it still so enjoyable a companion to mirth-loving right-minded men. Maclise took earnest part with us, and was to have acted, but fell away on the eve of the rehearsals; and Stanfield, who went so far as to rehearse Downright twice, then took fright and also ran away: but Jerrold, who played Master Stephen, brought with him Lemon, who took Brainworm; Leech, to whom Master Matthew was given; A'Beckett, who had condescended to the small part of William; and Mr. Leigh, who had Oliver Cob. I played Kitely, and Bobadil fell to Dickens, who took upon him the redoubtable Captain long before he stood in his dress at the footlights; humouring the completeness of his assumption by talking and writing Bobadil, till the dullest of our party were touched and stirred to something of his own heartiness of enjoyment. One or two hints of these have been given, and I will only add to them his refusal of my wish that he should go and see some special performance of "The Gamester." "Man of the House. 'Gamester!' By the foot of Pharaoh, I will *not* see 'The Gamester.' Man shall not force, nor horses drag, this poor gentleman-like carcass into the presence of 'The Gamester.' I have said it. . . . The player Mac hath bidden me to eat and likewise drink with him, thyself, and short-necked Fox to-night. An' I go not, I am a hog, and not a soldier. But an' thou goest not—Beware citizen! Look to it. . . . Thine as thou meritest. BOBADIL (Captain). Unto Master Kitely. These."

The play was played on the 21st of September with a

success that outran the wildest expectation; and turned our little enterprise into one of the small sensations of the day. . . . Though Dickens had the title to be called a born comedian, the turn for it being in his very nature, his strength was rather in the vividness and variety of his assumptions, than in the completeness, finish, or ideality he could give to any part of them. At the same time this was in itself so thoroughly genuine and enjoyable, and had in it such quickness and keenness of insight, that of its kind it was unrivalled; and it enabled him to present in Bobadil, after a richly coloured picture of bombastical extravagance and comic exaltation in the earlier scenes, a contrast in the later of tragical humility and abasement that had a wonderful effect. But greatly as his acting contributed to the success of the night, this was nothing to the service he had rendered as manager. It would be difficult to describe it. He was the life and soul of the entire affair. I never seemed till then to have known his business capabilities. He took everything on himself, and did the whole of it without an effort. He was stage-director, very often stage-carpenter, scene-arranger, property-man, prompter, and band-master. Without offending any one he kept every one in order. For all he had useful suggestions, and the dullest of clays under his potter's hand were transformed into little bits of porcelain. He adjusted scenes, assisted carpenters, invented costumes, devised playbills, wrote out calls, and enforced as well as exhibited in his proper person everything of which he urged the necessity on others. Such a chaos of dirt, confusion, and noise, as the little theatre was the day we entered it, and such a cosmos as he made it of cleanliness, order, and silence, before the rehearsals were over!

XII.

[In June, 1846, Dickens went to Switzerland]. What at once had struck him as the wonderful feature in the mountain scenery was its everchanging and yet unchanging aspect. It was never twice like the same thing to him. Shifting and altering, advancing and retreating,

fifty times a day, it was unalterable only in its grandeur. The lake itself [Geneva] too had every kind of varying beauty for him. By moonlight it was indescribably solemn; and before the coming on of a storm had a strange property in it of being disturbed, while yet the sky remained clear and the evening bright, which he found to be very mysterious and impressive. Such a storm had come among his earliest and most grateful experiences; a degree of heat worse even than in Italy * having disabled him at the outset for all exertion until the lightning, thunder, and rain arrived. The letter telling me this (5th July, 1846) described the fruit as so abundant in the little farm, that the trees of the orchard in front of his house were bending beneath it; spoke of a field of wheat sloping down to the side window of his dining-room as already cut and carried; and said that the roses, which the hurricane of rain had swept away, were come back lovelier and in greater numbers than ever.

Of the ordinary Swiss people he formed from the first a high opinion which everything during his stay among them confirmed. In his first letters he said of the peasantry all about Lausanne that they were as pleasant a people as need be. He never passed, on any of the roads, man, woman, or child, without a salutation; and anything churlish or disagreeable he never noticed in them. "They have not," he continued, "the sweetness and grace of the Italians, or the agreeable manners of the better specimens of French peasantry, but they are admirably educated (the schools of this canton are extraordinarily good, in every little village), and always prepared to give a civil and pleasant answer. There is no greater mistake. I was

* "When it is very hot, it is hotter than in Italy. The over-hanging roofs of the houses, and the quantity of wood employed in their construction (where they use tile and brick in Italy), render them perfect forcing-houses. The walls and floors, hot to the hand all the night through, interfere with sleep; and thunder is almost always booming and rumbling among the mountains." Besides this, though there were no mosquitoes as in Genoa, there was at first a plague of flies, more distressing even than at Albaro. "They cover everything eatable, fall into everything drinkable, stagger into the wet ink of newly-written words and make tracks on the writing paper, clog their legs in the lather on your chin while you are shaving in the morning, and drive you frantic at any time when there is daylight if you fall asleep."

talking to my landlord * about it the other day, and he said he could not conceive how it had ever arisen, but that when he returned from his eighteen years' service in the English navy he shunned the people, and had no interest in them until they gradually forced their real character upon his observation. We have a cook and a coachman here, taken at hazard from the people of the town; and I never saw more obliging servants, or people who did their work so truly *with a will.* And in point of cleanliness, order, and punctuality to the moment, they are unrivalled. . . ."

The first great gathering of the Swiss peasantry which he saw was in the third week after his arrival, when a country fête was held at a place called The Signal; a deep green wood, on the sides and summit of a very high hill overlooking the town and all the country round; and he gave me a pleasant account of it.

"There were various booths for eating and drinking, and the selling of trinkets and sweetmeats; and in one place there was a great circle cleared, in which the common people waltzed and polka'd, without cessation, to the music of a band. There was a great roundabout for children (oh my stars what a family were proprietors of it! A sunburnt father and mother, a hump-backed boy, a great poodle-dog possessed of all sorts of accomplishments, and a young murderer of seventeen who turned the machinery); and there were some games of chance and skill established under trees. It was very pretty. In some of the drinking booths there were parties of German peasants, twenty together perhaps, singing national drinking-songs, and making a most exhilarating and musical chorus by rattling their cups and glasses on the table and clinking them against each other, to a regular tune. You know it as a stage dodge, but the real thing is splendid.

* His preceding letter had sketched his landlord for me. . . . "There was an annual child's fête at The Signal the other night: given by the town. It was beautiful to see perhaps a hundred couple of children dancing in an immense ring in a green wood. Our three eldest were among them, presided over by my landlord, who was eighteen years in the English navy, and is the Sous Préfet of the town—a very good fellow indeed; quite an Englishman. Our landlady, nearly twice his age, used to keep the Inn (a famous one) at Zurich; and having made £50,000 bestowed it on a young husband. She might have done worse."

Farther down the hill, other peasants were rifle-shooting for prizes, at targets set on the other side of a deep ravine, from two to three hundred yards off. It was quite fearful to see the astonishing accuracy of their aim, and how, every time a rifle awakened the ten thousand echoes of the green glen, some men crouching behind a little wall immediately in front of the targets, sprung up with large numbers in their hands denoting where the ball had struck the bull's-eye—and then in a moment disappeared again. Standing in a ring near these shooters was another party of Germans singing hunting-songs, in parts, most melodiously. And down in the distance was Lausanne, with all sorts of haunted-looking old towers rising up before the smooth water of the lake, and an evening sky all red, and gold, and bright green. When it closed in quite dark, all the booths were lighted up; and the twinkling of the lamps among the forest of trees was beautiful. . . ." To this pretty picture, a letter of a little later date, describing a marriage on the farm, added farther comical illustration of the rifle-firing propensities of the Swiss, and had otherwise also whimsical touches of character. "One of the farmer's people—a sister, I think—was married from here the other day. It is wonderful to see how naturally the smallest girls are interested in marriages. Katey and Mamey were as excited as if they were eighteen. The fondness of the Swiss for gunpowder on interesting occasions, is one of the drollest things. For three days before, the farmer himself, in the midst of his various agricultural duties, plunged out of a little door near my windows, about once in every hour, and fired off a rifle. I thought he was shooting rats who were spoiling the vines; but he was merely relieving his mind, it seemed, on the subject of the approaching nuptials. All night afterwards, he and a small circle of friends kept perpetually letting off guns under the casement of the bridal chamber. A Bride is always drest here, in black silk; but this bride wore merino of that colour, observing to her mother when she bought it (the old lady is eighty-two, and works on the farm), 'You know, mother, I am sure to want mourning for you, soon; and the same gown will do.'"

His next letter (written on the second of August, 1846) described his own first real experience of mountain travel.

"I begin my letter to-night, but only begin, for we returned from Chamonix in time for dinner just now, and are pretty considerably done up. We went by a mountain pass not often crossed by ladies, called the Col de Balme, where your imagination may picture Kate and Georgy on mules *for ten hours at a stretch* riding up and down the most frightful precipices. We returned by the pass of the Tête Noire, which Talfourd knows, and which is of a different character, but astonishingly fine too. Mont Blanc, and the Valley of Chamonix, and the Mer de Glace, and all the wonders of that most wonderful place, are above and beyond one's wildest expectations. I cannot imagine anything in nature more stupendous or sublime. If I were to write about it now, I should quite rave—such prodigious impressions are rampant within me. . . . You may suppose that the mule-travelling is pretty primitive. Each person takes a carpet-bag strapped on the mule behind himself or herself: and that is all the baggage that can be carried. A guide, a thorough-bred mountaineer, walks all the way, leading the lady's mule; I say the lady's *par excellence*, in compliment to Kate; and all the rest struggle on as they please. The cavalcade stops at a lone hut for an hour and a half in the middle of the day, and lunches brilliantly on whatever it can get. Going by that Col de Balme pass, you climb up and up and up for five hours and more, and look—from a mere unguarded ledge of path on the side of the precipice—into such awful valleys, that at last you are firm in the belief that you have got above everything in the world, and that there can be nothing earthly overhead. Just as you arrive at this conclusion, a different (and oh Heaven! what a free and wonderful) air comes blowing on your face; you cross a ridge of snow; and lying before you (wholly unseen till then), towering up into the distant sky, is the vast range of Mont Blanc, with attendant mountains diminished by its majestic side into mere dwarfs tapering up into innumerable rude Gothic pinnacles; deserts of ice and snow; forests of firs on mountain sides, of no account at all in the enormous scene; villages down in the hollow, that you can shut out with a finger; waterfalls, avalanches, pyramids and towers of ice, torrents, bridges; mountain upon mountain until the very sky is blocked away, and you must look up, overhead, to see it.

Good God, what a country Switzerland is, and what a concentration of it is to be beheld from that one spot! And (think of this in Whitefriars and in Lincoln's Inn!) at noon on the second day from here, the first day being but half a one by the by and full of uncommon beauty, you lie down on that ridge and see it all! . . . I think I must go back again (whether you come or not!) and see it again before the bad weather arrives. We have had sunlight, moonlight, a perfectly transparent atmosphere with not a cloud, and the grand plateau on the very summit of Mont Blanc so clear by day and night that it was difficult to believe in intervening chasms and precipices, and almost impossible to resist the idea that one might sally forth and climb up easily. I went into all sorts of places; armed with a great pole with a spike at the end of it, like a leaping-pole, and with pointed irons buckled on to my shoes; and am all but knocked up. . . ."

On the road as they returned, there had been a small adventure, the day before this letter was written. Dickens was jingling slowly up the Tête Noire pass (his mule having thirty-seven bells on its head), riding at the moment quite alone, when—"an Englishman came bolting out of a little chalet in a most inaccessible and extraordinary place, and said with great glee 'There has been an accident here, sir!' I had been thinking of anything else you please! and, having no reason to suppose him an Englishman except his language, which went for nothing in the confusion, stammered out a reply in French and stared at him, in a very damp shirt and trowsers, as he stared at me in a similar costume. On his repeating the announcement, I began to have a glimmering of common sense; and so arrived at a knowledge of the fact that a German lady had been thrown from her mule and had broken her leg, at a short distance off, and had found her way in great pain to that cottage, where the Englishman, a Prussian, and a Frenchman, had presently come up; and the Frenchman, by extraordinary good fortune, was a surgeon! They were all from Chamonix, and the three latter were walking in company. It was quite charming to see how attentive they were. The lady was from Lausanne; where she had come from Frankfort to make excursions with her two boys, who are at the college here, during the vacation. She had no other attendants,

and the boys were crying and very frightened. The Englishman was in the full glee of having just cut up one white dress, two chemises, and three pocket handkerchiefs, for bandages; the Frenchman had set the leg, skilfully; the Prussian had scoured a neighbouring wood for some men to carry her forward; and they were all at it, behind the hut, making a sort of hand-barrow on which to bear her. When it was constructed, she was strapped upon it; had her poor head covered over with a handkerchief, and was carried away; and we all went on in company: Kate and Georgy consoling and tending the sufferer, who was very cheerful, but had lost her husband only a year."

One social and very novel experience he had in his hotel [at Geneva], the night before he left. "And now, sir, I will describe, modestly, tamely, literally, the visit to the small select circle which I promised should make your hair stand on end. In our hotel were a Mother and a Daughter, who came to the Peschiere shortly before we left it, and who have a deep admiration for your humble servant the inimitable B. They are both very clever. Daughter, extremely well informed in languages living and dead, books, and gossip; very pretty; with two little children, and not yet five and twenty. Mother, plump, fresh, and rosy; matronly, but full of spirits and good looks. Nothing would serve them but we *must* dine with them; and accordingly, on Friday at six, we went down to their room. I knew them to be rather odd. For instance, I have known the Mother, *full dressed,* walk alone through the streets of Genoa, the squalid Italian by-streets, to the Governor's soirée; and announce herself at the palace of state, by knocking at the door. I have also met the Daughter full dressed, without any cap or bonnet, walking a mile to the opera, with all sorts of jingling jewels about her, beside a sedan chair in which sat enthroned her mama. Consequently, I was not surprised at such little sparkles in the conversation (from the young lady), as 'Oh God what a sermon we had here, last Sunday!' 'And did you ever read such infernal trash as Mrs. Gore's?'—and the like. Still, but for Kate and Georgy (who were decidedly in the way, as we agreed afterwards), I should have thought it all very funny; and, as it was, I threw the ball

back again, was mighty free and easy, made some rather broad jokes, and was highly applauded. 'You smoke, don't you?' said the young lady, in a pause of this kind of conversation. 'Yes,' I said, 'I generally take a cigar after dinner when I am alone.' 'I'll give you a good 'un,' said she, 'when we go upstairs.' Well, sir, in due course we went upstairs, and there we were joined by an American lady residing in the same hotel, who looked like what we call in old England 'a reg'lar Bunter'—fluffy face (rouged); considerable development of figure; one groggy eye; blue satin dress made low with short sleeves, and shoes of the same. Also a daughter; face likewise fluffy; figure likewise developed; dress likewise low, with short sleeves, and shoes of the same; and one eye not yet actually groggy, but going to be. American lady married at sixteen; American daughter sixteen now, often mistaken for sisters, etc. etc. etc. When that was over, the younger of our entertainers brought out a cigar-box, and gave me a cigar, made of negrohead she said, which would quell an elephant in six whiffs. The box was full of cigarettes—good large ones, made of pretty strong tobacco; I always smoke them here, and used to smoke them at Genoa, and I knew them well. When I lighted my cigar, Daughter lighted hers, at mine; leaned against the mantelpiece, in conversation with me; put out her stomach, folded her arms, and with her pretty face cocked up sideways and her cigarette smoking away like a Manchester cotton mill, laughed, and talked, and smoked, in the most gentlemanly manner I ever beheld. Mother immediately lighted her cigar; American lady immediately lighted hers; and in five minutes the room was a cloud of smoke, with us four in the centre pulling away bravely, while American lady related stories of her 'Hookah' upstairs, and described different kinds of pipes. But even this was not all. For presently two Frenchmen came in, with whom, and the American lady, Daughter sat down to whist. The Frenchmen smoked of course (they were really modest gentlemen and seemed dismayed), and Daughter played for the next hour or two with a cigar continually in her mouth—never out of it. She certainly smoked six or eight. Mother gave in soon—I think she only did it out of vanity. American lady had been smoking all the morning. I took no more; and Daughter and the Frenchmen had it all to themselves.

"Conceive this in a great hotel, with not only their own servants, but half a dozen waiters coming constantly in and out! I showed no atom of surprise, but I never *was* so surprised, so ridiculously taken aback, in my life; for in all my experience of 'ladies' of one kind and another, I never saw a woman—not a basket woman or a gipsy—smoke, before!" He lived to have larger and wider experience, but there was enough to startle as well as amuse him in the scene described.

XIII.

Letters of the summer [1848] from Broadstairs will enable me to say, what I know he wished to be remembered in his story, that there was no subject on which through his whole life he felt more strongly than [that of temperance]. No man advocated temperance, even as far as possible its legislative enforcement, with greater earnestness; but he made important reservations. Not thinking drunkenness to be a vice inborn, or incident to the poor more than to other people, he never would agree that the existence of a gin-shop was the alpha and omega of it. Believing it to be *the* "national horror," he also believed that many operative causes had to do with having made it so; and his objection to the temperance agitation was that these were left out of account altogether. He thought the gin-shop not fairly to be rendered the exclusive object of attack, until, in connection with the classes who mostly made it their resort, the temptations that led to it, physical and moral, should have been more bravely dealt with. Among the former he counted foul smells, disgusting habitations, bad workshops, and workshop-customs, scarcity of light, air, and water, in short the absence of all easy means of decency and health; and among the latter, the mental weariness and languor so induced, the desire of wholesome relaxation, the craving for *some* stimulus and excitement, not less needful than the sun itself to lives so passed, and last, and inclusive of all the rest, ignorance, and the want of rational mental training generally applied. This was consistently Dickens's "plat-

form" throughout the years he was known to me; and holding it to be within the reach as well as the scope of legislation, which even our political magnates have been discovering lately, he thought intemperance to be but the one result that, out of all of those arising from the absence of legislation, was the most wretched. For him, drunkenness had a teeming and reproachful history anterior to the drunken stage; and he thought it the first duty of the moralist bent upon annihilating the gin-shop, to "strike deep and spare not" at those previous remediable evils.

My visit [to Dickens at Bonchurch] was due at the opening of September [1849], but a few days earlier came the full revelation of which only a passing shadow had reached in two or three previous letters. "Before I think of beginning my next number, I perhaps cannot do better than give you an imperfect description of the results of the climate of Bonchurch after a few weeks' residence. The first salubrious effect of which the Patient becomes conscious is an almost continual feeling of sickness, accompanied with great prostration of strength, so that his legs tremble under him, and his arms quiver when he wants to take hold of any object. An extraordinary disposition to sleep (except at night, when his rest, in the event of his having any, is broken by incessant dreams) is always present at the same time; and, if he have anything to do requiring thought and attention, this overpowers him to such a degree that he can only do it in snatches: lying down on beds in the fitful intervals. Extreme depression of mind, and a disposition to shed tears from morning to night, develops itself at the same period. If the Patient happen to have been a good walker, he finds ten miles an insupportable distance; in the achievement of which his legs are so unsteady, that he goes from side to side of the road, like a drunken man. If he happen to have ever possessed any energy of any kind, he finds it quenched in a dull, stupid languor. He has no purpose, power, or object in existence whatever. When he brushes his hair in the morning, he is so weak that he is obliged to sit upon a chair to do it. He is incapable of reading, at all times. And his bilious system is so utterly overthrown, that a ball of boiling fat appears to be always behind the top of the bridge of his nose, simmering be-

tween his haggard eyes. If he should have caught a cold, he will find it impossible to get rid of it, as his system is wholly incapable of making any effort. His cough will be deep, monotonous, and constant. 'The faithful watch-dog's honest "bark"' will be nothing to it. He will abandon all present idea of overcoming it, and will content himself with keeping an eye upon his blood-vessels to preserve them whole and sound. *Patient's name, Inimitable B.* . . . It's a mortal mistake!—That's the plain fact. Of all the places I ever have been in, I have never been in one so difficult to exist in pleasantly. Naples is hot and dirty, New York feverish, Washington bilious, Genoa exciting, Paris rainy—but Bonchurch, smashing. I am quite convinced that I should die here, in a year. . . ."

Though he stayed out his time, and brought away nothing that his happier associations with the place and its residents did not long survive, he never returned to Bonchurch.

Lytton's comedy, "Not so Bad as We Seem," was played for the first time at Devonshire House on the 16th of May, 1851, before the Queen and Prince and as large an audience as places could be found for; the farce of "Mr. Nightingale's Diary" being reserved for the second performance. The success abundantly realised expectation; and, after many representations at the Hanover Square rooms in London, strolling began in the country, and was continued at intervals for considerable portions of this and the following year. The company carried with them the theatre constructed for Devonshire House. . . .

"The comedy," Dickens wrote from Sunderland on the 29th of August, 1852, "is so far improved by the reductions imposed on us, that it acts now only two hours and twenty-five minutes, all waits included, and goes 'like wildfire,' as Mr. Tonson says. We have had prodigious houses, though smaller rooms (as to their actual size) than I had hoped for. The Duke was at Derby, and no end of minor radiances. Into the room at Newcastle (where Lord Carlisle was by the by) they squeezed six hundred people, at twelve and sixpence, into a space reasonably capable of holding three hundred. Last night, in a hall built like a theatre, with pit, boxes, and gallery, we had about twelve hundred—I dare say more."

XIV.

The voyage [of Dickens and his party from Genoa to Naples, October, 1853], written from Naples is too capital a description to be lost. The steamer in which they embarked was "the new express English ship," but they found her to be already more than full of passengers from Marseilles (among them an old friend, Sir Emerson Tennent, with his family), and everything in confusion. There were no places at the captain's table, dinner had to be taken on deck, no berth or sleeping accommodation was available, and heavy first-class fares had to be paid. Thus they made their way to Leghorn, where worse awaited them. The authorities proved to be not favourable to the "crack" English-officered vessel (she had just been started for the India mail); and her papers not being examined in time, it was too late to steam away again that day, and she had to lie all night long off the lighthouse. "The scene on board beggars description. Ladies on the tables; gentlemen under the tables; bedroom appliances not usually beheld in public airing themselves in positions where soup-tureens had been lately developing themselves; and ladies and gentlemen lying indiscriminately on the open deck, arranged like spoons on a sideboard. No mattresses, no blankets, nothing. Towards midnight attempts were made, by means of awning and flags, to make this latter scene remotely approach an Australian encampment; and we three (Collins, Egg, and self) lay together on the bare planks covered with our coats. We were all gradually dozing off, when a perfectly tropical rain fell, and in a moment drowned the whole ship. The rest of the night we passed upon the stairs, with an immense jumble of men and women. When anybody came up for any purpose we all fell down, and when anybody came down we all fell up again. Still, the good humour in the English part of the passengers was quite extraordinary. . . . There were excellent officers aboard, and, in the morning, the first mate lent me his cabin to wash in—which I afterwards lent to Egg and Collins. Then we, the Emerson Tennents, the captain, the doctor, and the second officer, went off on a jaunt together to Pisa, as the ship was to

lie all day at Leghorn. The captain was a capital fellow, but I led him, facetiously, such a life the whole day, that I got most things altered at night. Emerson Tennent's son, with the greatest amiability, insisted on turning out of his stateroom for me, and I got a good bed there. The storeroom down by the hold was opened for Collins and Egg; and they slept with the moist sugar, the cheese in cut, the spices, the cruets, the apples and pears, in a perfect chandler's shop—in company with what a friend of ours would call a hold gent, who had been so horribly wet through over night that his condition frightened the authorities; a cat; and the steward, who dozed in an arm-chair, and all-night-long fell head foremost, once every five minutes, on Egg, who slept on the counter or dresser. Last night, I had the steward's own cabin, opening on deck, all to myself. It had been previously occupied by some desolate lady who went ashore at Civita Vecchia. There was little or no sea, thank Heaven, all the trip; but the rain was heavier than any I have ever seen, and the lightning very constant and vivid. We were, with the crew, some two hundred people—provided with boats, at the utmost stretch, for one hundred perhaps. I could not help thinking what would happen if we met with any accident: the crew being chiefly Maltese, and evidently fellows who would cut off alone in the largest boat, on the least alarm; the speed very high; and the running, thro' all the narrow rocky channels. Thank God, however, here we are."

A whimsical postscript closed the amusing narrative. "We towed from Civita Vecchia the entire Greek navy, I believe; consisting of a little brig of war with no guns, fitted as a steamer, but disabled by having burnt the bottoms of her boilers out, in her first run. She was just big enough to carry the captain and a crew of six or so: but the captain was so covered with buttons and gold that there never would have been room for him on board to put those valuables away, if he hadn't worn them—which he consequently did, all night. Whenever anything was wanted to be done, as slackening the tow-rope or anything of that sort, our officers roared at this miserable potentate, in violent English, through a speaking-trumpet; of which he couldn't have understood a word in the most favourable circumstances. So he did all the wrong things first,

and the right thing always last. The absence of a knowledge of anything but English on the part of t officers and stewards was most ridiculous. I met a Italian gentleman on the cabin steps yesterday mornin vainly endeavouring to explain that he wanted a cup tea for his sick wife. And when we were coming out the harbour at Genoa, and it was necessary to order aw that boat of music you remember, the chief officer (call 'aft' for the purpose, as 'knowing something of Italian' delivered himself in this explicit and clear Italian to th principal performer—'Now Signora, if you don't shee off you'll be run down, so you had better trice up tha guitar of yours and put about.'"

At Naples some days were passed very merrily; goin up Vesuvius and into the buried cities, with Layard wh had joined them, and with the Tennents. Here a small adventure befell Dickens specially, in itself extremely unimportant, but told by him with delightful humour in a letter to his sister-in-law. The old idle Frenchman, to whom all things are possible, with his snuff-box and dusty umbrella and all the delicate and kindly observation, would have enchanted Leigh Hunt, and made his way to the heart of Charles Lamb. After mentioning Mr. Lowther, then English chargé d'affaires in Naples, as a very agreeable fellow who had been at the Rockingham play, he alludes to a meeting at his house. "We had an exceedingly pleasant dinner of eight, preparatory to which I was near having the ridiculous adventure of not being able to find the house and coming back dinnerless. I went in an open carriage from the hotel in all state, and the coachman to my surprise pulled up at the end of the Chiaja. 'Behold the house,' says he, 'of Il Signor Larthoor!'—at the same time pointing with his whip into the seventh heaven where the early stars were shining. 'But the Signor Larthorr,' says I, 'lives at Pausilippo.' 'It is true,' says the coachman (still pointing to the evening star), 'but he lives high up the Salita Sant' Antonio where no carriage ever yet ascended, and that is the house' (evening star as aforesaid), 'and one must go on foot. Behold the Salita Sant' Antonio!' I went up it, a mile and a half I should think. I got into the strangest places among the wildest Neapolitans; kitchens, washing-places, archways, stables, vineyards; was baited by dogs, and

answered, in profoundly unintelligible language, from behind lonely locked doors in cracked female voices, quaking with fear; but could hear of no such Englishman, nor any Englishman. By the by, I came upon a polenta-shop in the clouds, where an old Frenchman with an umbrella like a faded tropical leaf (it had not rained in Naples for six weeks) was staring at nothing at all, with a snuff-box in his hand. To him I appealed, concerning the Signor Larthoor. 'Sir,' said he, with the sweetest politeness, 'can you speak French?' 'Sir,' said I, 'a little.' 'Sir,' said he, 'I presume the Signor Loothere'—you will observe that he changed the name according to the custom of his country—'is an Englishman?' I admitted that he was the victim of circumstances and had that misfortune. 'Sir,' said he, 'one word more. *Has* he a servant with a wooden leg?' 'Great heaven, sir,' said I, 'how do I know? I should think not, but it is possible.' 'It is always,' said the Frenchman, 'possible. Almost all the things of the world are always possible.' 'Sir,' said I—you may imagine my condition and dismal sense of my own absurdity, by this time—'that is true.' He then took an immense pinch of snuff, wiped the dust off his umbrella, led me to an arch commanding a wonderful view of the Bay of Naples, and pointed deep into the earth from which I had mounted. 'Below there, near the lamp, one finds an Englishman with a servant with a wooden leg. It is always possible that he is the Signor Loothore.' I had been asked at six o'clock, and it was now getting on for seven. I went back in a state of perspiration and misery not to be described, and without the faintest hope of finding the spot. But as I was going farther down to the lamp, I saw the strangest staircase up a dark corner, with a man in a white waistcoat (evidently hired) standing on the top of it fuming. I dashed in at a venture, found it was the house, made the most of the whole story, and achieved much popularity. The best of it was that as nobody ever did find the place, Lowther had put a servant at the bottom of the Salita to wait 'for an English gentleman'; but the servant (as he presently pleaded) deceived by the moustache, had allowed the English gentleman to pass unchallenged."

From Naples they went to Rome, where they found Lockhart, "fearfully weak and broken, yet hopeful of him-

self too" (he died the following year); smoked and drank punch with David Roberts, then painting every day with Louis Haghe in St. Peter's; and took the old walks. The Coliseum, Appian Way, and Street of Tombs, seemed desolate and grand as ever; but generally, Dickens adds, "I discovered the Roman antiquities to be *smaller* than my imagination in nine years had made them. The Electric Telegraph now goes like a sunbeam through the cruel old heart of the Coliseum—a suggestive thing to think about, I fancied. The Pantheon I thought even nobler than of yore." The amusements were of course an attraction; and nothing at the Opera amused the party of three English more, than another party of four Americans who sat behind them in the pit. "All the seats are numbered armchairs, and you buy your number at the pay-place, and go to it with the easiest direction on the ticket itself. We were early, and the four places of the Americans were on the next row behind us—all together. After looking about them for some time, and seeing the greater part of the seats empty (because the audience generally wait in a café which is part of the theatre), one of them said, 'Waal I dunno—I expect we aint no call to set so nigh to one another neither—will you scatter Kernel, will you scatter sir?'—Upon this the Kernel 'scattered' some twenty benches off; and they distributed themselves (for no earthly reason apparently but to get rid of one another) all over the pit. As soon as the overture began, in came the audience in a mass. Then the people who got the numbers into which they had 'scattered,' had to get them out; and as they understood nothing that was said to them, and could make no reply but 'A-mericani,' you may imagine the number of cocked hats it took to dislodge them. At last they were all got back into their right places, except one. About an hour afterwards when Moses ('Moses in Egypt' was the opera) was invoking the darkness, and there was a dead silence all over the house, unwonted sounds of disturbance broke out from a distant corner of the pit, and here and there a beard got up to look. 'What is it neow, sir?' said one of the Americans to another; 'some person seems to be getting along, again streeem.' 'Waal sir,' he replied, 'I dunno. But I xpect 'tis the Kernel sir, a holdin on.' So it was. The Kernel was ignominiously escorted back to his right place, not in

the least disconcerted, and in perfectly good spirits and temper."

Another theatre of the smallest pretension Dickens sought out with avidity in Rome, and eagerly enjoyed. He had heard it said in his old time in Genoa that the finest Marionetti were here; and now, after great difficulty, he discovered the company in a sort of stable attached to a decayed palace. "It was a wet night, and there was no audience but a party of French officers and ourselves. We all sat together. I never saw anything more amazing than the performance—altogether only an hour long, but managed by as many as ten people, for we saw them all go behind, at the ringing of a bell. The saving of a young lady by a good fairy from the machinations of an enchanter, coupled with the comic business of her servant Pulcinella (the Roman Punch) formed the plot of the first piece. A scolding old peasant woman, who always leaned forward to scold and put her hands in the pockets of her apron, was incredibly natural. Pulcinella, so airy, so merry, and lifelike, so graceful, he was irresistible. To see him carrying an umbrella over his mistress's head in a storm, talking to a prodigious giant whom he met in the forest, and going to bed with a pony, were things never to be forgotten. And so delicate are the hands of the people who move them, that every puppet was an Italian, and did exactly what an Italian does. If he pointed at any object, if he saluted anybody, if he laughed, if he cried, he did it as never Englishman did it since Britain first at Heaven's command arose—arose—arose, etc. There was a ballet afterwards, on the same scale, and we came away really quite enchanted with the delicate drollery of the thing. French officers more than ditto."

Of the great enemy to the health of the capital of the kingdom of Italy, Dickens remarked in the same letter: "I have been led into some curious speculations by the existence and progress of the Malaria about Rome. Isn't it very extraordinary to think of its encroaching and encroaching on the Eternal City as if it were commissioned to swallow it up? This year it has been extremely bad, and has long outstayed its usual time. Rome has been very unhealthy, and is not free now. Few people care to be out at the bad times of sunset and sunrise, and the streets are like a desert at night. There is a church, a

very little way outside the walls, destroyed by fire some sixteen or eighteen years ago, and now restored and re-created at an enormous expense. It stands in a wilderness. For any human creature who goes near it, or can sleep near it, after nightfall, it might as well be at the bottom of the uppermost cataract of the Nile. Along the whole extent of the Pontine Marches (which we came across the other day), no creature in Adam's likeness lives, except the sallow people at the lonely posting-stations. I walk out from the Coliseum through the Street of Tombs to the ruins of the old Appian Way—pass no human being, and see no human habitation but ruined houses from which the people have fled, and where it is Death to sleep: these houses being three miles outside a gate of Rome at its farthest extent. Leaving Rome by the opposite side, we travel for many many hours over the dreary Campagna, shunned and avoided by all but the wretched shepherds. Thirteen hours' good posting brings us to Bolsena (I slept there once before), on the margin of a stagnant lake whence the workpeople fly as the sun goes down—where it is a risk to go; where from a distance we saw a mist hang on the place; where, in the inconceivably wretched inn, no window can be opened; where our dinner was a pale ghost of a fish with an oily omelette, and we slept in great mouldering rooms tainted with ruined arches and heaps of dung—and coming from which we saw no colour in the cheek of man, woman, or child for another twenty miles. Imagine this phantom knocking at the gates of Rome; passing them; creeping along the streets; haunting the aisles and pillars of the churches; year by year more encroaching, and more impossible of avoidance."

From Rome they posted to Florence, reaching it in three days and a half, on the morning of the 20th of November; having then been out six weeks, with only three days' rain; and in another week they were at Venice. "The fine weather has accompanied us here," Dickens wrote on the 28th of November, "the place of all others where it is necessary, and the city has been a blaze of sunlight and blue sky (with an extremely clear cold air) ever since we have been in it. If you could see it at this moment you would never forget it. We live in the same house that I lived in nine years ago, and have the same sitting-

room—close to the Bridge of Sighs and the Palace of the Doges. The room is at the corner of the house, and there is a narrow street of water running round the side: so that we have the Grand Canal before the two front windows, and this wild little street at the corner window: into which, too, our three bedrooms look. We established a gondola as soon as we arrived, and we slide out of the hall on to the water twenty times a day. The gondoliers have queer old customs that belong to their class, and some are sufficiently disconcerting. . . . It is a point of honour with them, while they are engaged, to be always at your disposal. Hence it is no use telling them they may go home for an hour or two—for they won't go. They roll themselves in shaggy capuccins, great coats with hoods, and lie down on the stone or marble pavement until they are wanted again. So that when I come in or go out, on foot—which can be done from this house for some miles, over little bridges and by narrow ways—I usually walk over the principal of my vassals, whose custom it is to snore immediately across the doorway. Conceive the oddity of the most familiar things in this place, from one instance: Last night we go downstairs at half-past eight, step into the gondola, slide away on the black water, ripple and plash swiftly along for a mile or two, land at a broad flight of steps, and instantly walk into the most brilliant and beautiful theatre conceivable—all silver and blue, and precious little fringes made of glittering prisms of glass. There we sit until half-past eleven, come out again (gondolier asleep outside the box-door), and in a moment are on the black silent water, floating away as if there were no dry building in the world. It stops, and in a moment we are out again, upon the broad solid Piazza of St. Mark, brilliantly lighted with gas, very like the Palais Royal at Paris, only far more handsome, and shining with no end of cafés. The two old pillars and the enormous bell-tower are as gruff and solid against the exquisite starlight as if they were a thousand miles from the sea or any undermining water; and the front of the cathedral, overlaid with golden mosaics and beautiful colours, is like a thousand rainbows even in the night."

His formerly expressed notions as to art and pictures in Italy received confirmation at this visit. "I am more than ever confirmed in my conviction that one of the great

uses of travelling is to encourage a man to think for himself, to be bold enough always to declare without offence that he *does* think for himself, and to overcome the villainous meanness of professing what other people have professed when he knows (if he has capacity to originate an opinion) that his profession is untrue. The intolerable nonsense against which genteel taste and subserviency are afraid to rise, in connection with art, is astounding. Egg's honest amazement and consternation when he saw some of the most trumpeted things was what the Americans call a 'caution.' In the very same hour and minute there were scores of people falling into conventional raptures with that very poor Apollo, and passing over the most beautiful little figures and heads in the whole Vatican because they were not expressly set up to be worshipped. So in this place: There are pictures by Tintoretto in Venice more delightful and masterly than it is possible sufficiently to express. His Assembly of the Blest I do believe to be, take it all in all, the most wonderful and charming picture ever painted. Your guide-book writer, representing the general swarming of humbugs, rather patronises Tintoretto as a man of some sort of merit; and (bound to follow Eustace, Forsyth, and all the rest of them) directs you, on pain of being broke for want of gentility in appreciation, to go into ecstacies with things that have neither imagination, nature, proportion, possibility, nor anything else in them. You immediately obey, and tell your son to obey. He tells his son, and he tells his, and so the world gets at three-fourths of its frauds and miseries."

The last place visited was Turin, where the travellers arrived on the 5th of December, finding it, with a brightly shining sun, intensely cold and freezing hard. "There are double windows to all the rooms, but the Alpine air comes down and numbs my feet as I write (in a cap and shawl) within six feet of the fire." There was yet something better than this to report of that bracing Alpine air. To Dickens's remarks on the Sardinian race, and to what he says of the exile of the noblest Italians, the momentous events of the few following years gave striking comment; nor could better proof be afforded of the judgment he brought to the observation of what passed before him. "This is a remarkably agreeable place. A beautiful town,

prosperous, thriving, growing prodigiously, as Genoa is; crowded with busy inhabitants; full of noble streets and squares. The Alps, now covered deep with snow, are close upon it, and here and there seem almost ready to tumble into the houses. The contrast this part of Italy presents to the rest, is amazing. Beautifully made railroads, admirably managed; cheerful, active people; spirit, energy, life, progress. In Milan, in every street, the noble palace of some exile is a barrack, and dirty soldiers are lolling out of the magnificent windows—it seems as if the whole place were being gradually absorbed into soldiers. In Naples, something like a hundred thousand troops. 'I knew,' I said to a certain Neapolitan Marchese there whom I had known before, and who came to see me the night after I arrived, 'I knew a very remarkable gentleman when I was last here; who had never been out of his own country, but was perfectly acquainted with English literature, and had taught himself to speak English in that wonderful manner that no one could have known him for a foreigner; I am very anxious to see him again, but I forget his name.'—He named him, and his face fell directly. 'Dead?' said I.—'In exile.'—'O dear me!' said I, 'I had looked forward to seeing him again, more than any one I was acquainted with in the country!'—'What would you have!' says the Marchese in a low voice. He was a remarkable man—full of knowledge, full of spirit, full of generosity. Where should he be but in exile! Where could he be!' We said not another word about it, but I shall always remember the short dialogue."

On the other hand there were incidents of the Austrian occupation as to which Dickens thought the ordinary style of comment unfair; and his closing remark on their police is well worth preserving. "I am strongly inclined to think that our countrymen are to blame in the matter of the Austrian vexations to travellers that have been complained of. Their manner is so very bad, they are so extraordinarily suspicious, so determined to be done by everybody, and give so much offence. Now, the Austrian police are very strict, but they really know how to do business, and they do it. And if you treat them like gentlemen, they will always respond. When we first crossed the Austrian frontier, and were ushered into the police office, I took off my hat. The officer immediately

took off his, and was as polite—still doing his duty, without any compromise—as it was possible to be. When we came to Venice, the arrangements were very strict, but were so businesslike that the smallest possible amount of inconvenience consistent with strictness ensued. Here is the scene. A soldier has come into the railway carriage (a saloon on the American plan) some miles off, has touched his hat, and asked for my passport. I have given it. Soldier has touched his hat again, and retired as from the presence of superior officer. Alighted from carriage, we pass into a place like a banking-house, lighted up with gas. Nobody bullies us or drives us there, but we must go, because the road ends there. Several soldierly clerks. One very sharp chief. My passport is brought out of an inner room, certified to be *en règle*. Very sharp chief takes it, looks at it (it is rather longer, now, than 'Hamlet'), calls out—'Signor Carlo Dickens!' 'Here I am sir.' 'Do you intend remaining long in Venice sir?' 'Probably four days sir!' 'Italian is known to you sir. You have been in Venice before?' 'Once before sir.' 'Perhaps you remained longer then sir?' 'No indeed; I merely came to see, and went as I came.' 'Truly sir? Do I infer that you are going by Trieste?' 'No. I am going to Parma, and Turin, and by Paris home.' 'A cold journey sir; I hope it may be a pleasant one.' 'Thank you.'—He gives me one very sharp look all over, and wishes me a very happy night. I wish *him* a very happy night and it's done. The thing being done at all, could not be better done, or more politely—though I dare say if I had been sucking a gentish cane all the time, or talking in English to my compatriots, it might not unnaturally have been different. At Turin and at Genoa there are no such stoppages at all; but in any other part of Italy, give me an Austrian in preference to a native functionary. At Naples it is done in a beggarly, shambling, bungling, tardy, vulgar way; but I am strengthened in my old impression that Naples is one of the most odious places on the face of the earth. The general degradation oppresses me like foul air."

XV.

Dickens was in Boulogne, in 1853, from the middle of June to the end of September. In the following year he went again to Boulogne in June, and stayed, after finishing "Hard Times," until far into October. In February of 1855 he was for a fortnight in Paris with Wilkie Collins; not taking up his more prolonged residence there until the winter. From November, 1855, to the end of April, 1856, he made the French capital his home, working at "Little Dorrit" during all those months. Then, after a month's interval in Dover and London, he took up his third summer residence in Boulogne, whither his younger children had gone direct from Paris; and stayed until September, finishing "Little Dorrit" in London in the spring of 1857.

Of the first of these visits, a few lively notes of humour and character out of his letters will tell the story sufficiently. The second and third had points of more attractiveness. Those were the years of the French-English alliance, of the great exposition of English paintings, of the return of the troops from the Crimea, and of the visit of the Prince Consort to the Emperor; such interest as Dickens took in these several matters appearing in his letters with the usual vividness, and the story of his continental life coming out with amusing distinctness in the successive pictures they paint with so much warmth and colour.

For his first summer residence, in June, 1853, he had taken a house on the high ground near the Calais road; an odd French place with the strangest little rooms and halls, but standing in the midst of a large garden, with wood and waterfall, a conservatory opening on a great bank of roses, and paths and gates on one side to the ramparts, on the other to the sea. Above all there was a capital proprietor and landlord, by whom the cost of keeping up gardens and wood (which he called a forest) was defrayed, while he gave his tenant the whole range of both and all the flowers for nothing, sold him the garden produce as it was wanted, and kept a cow on the estate to supply the family milk. "If this were but three hundred miles farther off," wrote Dickens, "how the Eng-

lish would rave about it! I do assure you that there are picturesque people, and town, and country, about this place, that quite fill up the eye and fancy. As to the fishing people (whose dress can have changed neither in colour nor in form for many many years), and their quarter of the town cobweb-hung with great brown nets across the narrow up-hill streets, they are as good as Naples, every bit." His description both of house and landlord, of which I tested the exactness when I visited him, was in the old pleasant vein; requiring no connection with himself to give it interest, but, by the charm and ease with which everything picturesque or characteristic was disclosed, placed in the domain of art.

"O the rain here yesterday!" (26th of June.) "A great seal-fog rolling in, a strong wind blowing, and the rain coming down in torrents all day long. . . . This house is on a great hillside, backed up by woods of young trees. It faces the Haute Ville with the ramparts and the unfinished cathedral—which capital object is exactly opposite the windows. On the slope in front, going steep down to the right, all Boulogne is piled and jumbled about in a very picturesque manner. The view is charming—closed in at last by the tops of swelling hills; and the door is within ten minutes of the post-office, and within quarter of an hour of the sea. The garden is made in terraces up the hillside, like an Italian garden: the top walks being in the before-mentioned woods. The best part of it begins at the level of the house, and goes up at the back, a couple of hundred feet perhaps. There are at present thousands of roses all about the house, and no end of other flowers. There are five great summer-houses, and (I think) fifteen fountains—not one of which (according to the invariable French custom) ever plays. The house is a doll's house of many rooms. It is one story high, with eight and thirty steps up and down—tribune wise—to the front door: the noblest French demonstration I have ever seen I think. It is a double house; and as there are only four windows and a pigeon-hole to be beheld in front, you would suppose it to contain about four rooms. Being built on the hillside, the top story of the house at the back—there are two stories there—opens on the level of another garden. On the ground floor there is a very pretty hall, almost all glass; a little

dining-room opening on a beautiful conservatory, which is also looked into through a great transparent glass in a mirror-frame over the chimney-piece, just as in Paxton's room at Chatsworth; a spare bedroom, two little drawing-rooms opening into one another, the family bedrooms, a bath-room, a glass corridor, an open yard, and a kind of kitchen with a machinery of stoves and boilers. Above, there are eight tiny bedrooms all opening on one great room in the roof, originally intended for a billiard-room. In the basement there is an admirable kitchen with every conceivable requisite in it, a noble cellar, first-rate man's room and pantry; coach-house, stable, coal-store and wood-store; and in the garden is a pavilion, containing an excellent spare bedroom on the ground floor. The getting-up of these places, the looking-glasses, clocks, little stoves, all manner of fittings, must be seen to be appreciated. The conservatory is full of choice flowers and perfectly beautiful."

Then came the charm of the letter, his description of his landlord, lightly sketched by him in print as M. Loyal Devasseur, but here filled in with the most attractive touches his loving hand could give. "But the landlord—M. Beaucourt—is wonderful. Everybody here has two surnames (I cannot conceive why),* and M. Beaucourt, as he is always called, is by rights M. Beaucourt-Mutuel. He is a portly jolly fellow with a fine open face; lives on the hill behind, just outside the top of the garden; and was a linen-draper in the town, where he still has a shop, but is supposed to have mortgaged his business and to be in difficulties—all along of this place, which he has planted with his own hands; which he cultivates all day; and which he never on any consideration speaks of but as 'the property.' He is extraordinarily popular in Boulogne (the people in the shops invariably brightening up at the mention of his name, and congratulating us on being his tenants), and really seems to deserve it. He is such a liberal fellow that I can't bear to ask him for anything, since he instantly supplies it whatever it is. The things he has done in respect of unreasonable bedsteads and washing-stands, I blush to think of. I observed the other day in one of the side gardens—there are gardens

* He soon became acquainted with the custom of a man's adopting his wife's name in addition to his own.

at each side of the house too—a place where I thou the Comic Countryman" (a name he was giving just th to his youngest boy) "must infallibly trip over, and ma a little descent of a dozen feet. So I said, 'M. Beaucour —who instantly pulled off his cap and stood bareheaded— 'there are some spare pieces of wood lying by the co house; if you would have the kindness to have one la across here I think it would be safer.' 'Ah, mon Die sir,' said M. Beaucourt, 'it must be iron. This is not portion of the property where you would like to see wood 'But iron is so expensive,' said I, 'and it really is no worth while——' 'Sir, pardon me a thousand times, said M. Beaucourt, 'it shall be iron. Assuredly and perfectly it shall be iron.' 'Then M. Beaucourt,' said I, 'I shall be glad to pay a moiety of the cost.' 'Sir,' said M. Beaucourt, 'Never!' Then to change the subject, he slided from his firmness and gravity into a graceful conversational tone, and said, 'In the moonlight last night, the flowers on the property appeared, O Heaven, to be *bathing themselves in the sky.* You like the property?' 'M. Beaucourt,' said I, 'I am enchanted with it; I am more than satisfied with everything.' 'And I, sir,' said M. Beaucourt, laying his cap upon his breast, and kissing his hand—'I equally!' Yesterday two blacksmiths came for a day's work, and put up a good solid handsome bit of iron-railing, morticed into the stone parapet. . . . If the extraordinary things in the house defy description, the amazing phenomena in the gardens never could have been dreamed of by anybody but a Frenchman bent upon one idea. Besides a portrait of the house in the dining-room, there is a plan of the property in the hall. It looks about the size of Ireland; and to every one of the extraordinary objects, there is a reference with some portentous name. There are fifty-one such references, including the Cottage of Tom Thumb, the Bridge of Austerlitz, the Bridge of Jena, the Hermitage, the Bower of the Old Guard, the Labyrinth (I have no idea which is which); and there is guidance to every room in the house, as if it were a place on that stupendous scale that without such a clue you must infallibly lose your way, and perhaps perish of starvation between bedroom and bedroom." *

* Prices are reported in one of the letters; and, considering what they have been since, the touch of disappointment hinted at may

On the 3rd of July there came a fresh trait of the good 'ellow of a landlord. "Fancy what Beaucourt told me ast night. When he 'conceived the inspiration' of plant-ng the property ten years ago, he went over to England o buy the trees, took a small cottage in the market-:ardens at Putney, lived there three months, held a :ymposium every night attended by the principal gardeners of Fulham, Putney, Kew, and Hammersmith (which he :alls Hamsterdam), and wound up with a supper at which the market-gardeners rose, clinked their glasses, and ex-:laimed with one accord (I quote him exactly) VIVE BEAUCOURT! He was a captain in the National Guard, and Cavaignac his general. Brave Capitaine Beaucourt! said Cavaignac, you must receive a decoration. My Gen-eral, said Beaucourt, No! It is enough for me that I have done my duty. I go to lay the first stone of a house upon a Property I have—that house shall be my decora-tion. (Regard that house!)" Addition to the picture came in a letter of the 24th of July: with a droll glimpse of Shakespeare at the theatre, and of the Saturday's pig-market.

"I may mention that the great Beaucourt daily changes the orthography of this place. He has now fixed it, by having painted up outside the garden gate, 'Entrée particulière de la Villa des Moulineaux.' On another gate a little higher up, he has had painted 'Entrée des Ecuries de la Villa des Moulineaux.' On another gate a little lower down (applicable to one of the innumerable build-ings in the garden), 'Entrée du Tom Pouce.' On the highest gate of the lot, leading to his own house, 'Entrée du Château Napoléonienne.' All of which inscriptions you will behold in black and white when you come. I see little of him now, as, all things being 'bien arrangées,' he is delicate of appearing. His wife has been making a trip in the country during the last three weeks, but (as

raise a smile. "Provisions are scarcely as cheap as I expected, though very different from London: besides which, a pound weight here, is a pound and a quarter English. So that meat at 7*d.* a pound, is actually a fourth less. A capital dish of asparagus costs us about fivepence; a fowl, one and threepence; a duck, a few halfpence more; a dish of fish, about a shilling. The very best wine at tenpence that I ever drank—I used to get it very good for the same money in Genoa, but not so good. The common people very engaging and obliging."

he mentioned to me with his hat in his hand) it was necessary that he should remain here, to be continually at the disposition of the tenant of the Property. (The better to do this, he has had roaring dinner parties of fifteen daily; and the old woman who milks the cows has been fainting up the hill under vast burdens of champagne.)

"We went to the theatre last night, to see the 'Midsummer Night's Dream'—of the Opera Comique. It is a beautiful little theatre now, with a very good company; and the nonsense of the piece was done with a sense quite confounding in that connection. Willy Am Shay Kes Peer; Sirzhon Foll Stayffe; Lor Lattimeer; and that celebrated Maid of Honour to Queen Elizabeth, Meees Oleeveeir—were the principal characters.

"Outside the old town, an army of workmen are (and have been for a week or so, already) employed upon an immense building which I supposed might be a Fort, or a Monastery, or a Barrack, or other something designed to last for ages. I find it is for the annual fair, which begins on the fifth of August and lasts a fortnight. Almost every Sunday we have a fête, where there is dancing in the open air, and where immense men with prodigious beards revolve on little wooden horses like Italian irons, in what we islanders call a roundabout, by the hour together. But really the good humour and cheerfulness are very delightful. Among the other sights of the place, there is a pig-market every Saturday, perfectly insupportable in its absurdity. An excited French peasant, male or female, with a determined young pig, is the most amazing spectacle. I saw a little Drama enacted yesterday week, the drollery of which was perfect. *Dram. Pers.* 1. A pretty young woman with short petticoats and trim blue stockings, riding a donkey with two baskets and a pig in each. 2. An ancient farmer in a blouse, driving four pigs, his four-in-hand, with an enormous whip—and being drawn against walls and into smoking shops by any one of the four. 3. A cart, with an old pig (manacled) looking out of it, and terrifying six hundred and fifty young pigs in the market by his terrific grunts. 4. Collector of Octroi in an immense cocked hat, with a stream of young pigs running, night and day, between his military boots and rendering accounts impossible. 5. Inimitable, confronted by a radiation of elderly pigs, fastened each by one leg to

a bunch of stakes in the ground. 6. John Edmund Reade, poet, expressing eternal devotion to and admiration of Landor, unconscious of approaching pig recently escaped from barrow. 7. Priests, peasants, soldiers, etc., etc."

In June, 1854, M. Beaucourt had again received his famous tenant, but in another cottage or château (to him convertible terms) on the much cherished property, placed on the very summit of the hill with a private road leading out to the Column, a really pretty place, rooms larger than in the other house, a noble sea view, everywhere nice prospects, good garden, and plenty of sloping turf.* It was called the Villa du Camp de Droite, and here Dickens stayed until the eve of his winter residence in Paris.

The formation of the Northern Camp at Boulogne began the week after he had finished "Hard Times," and he watched its progress, as it increased and extended itself along the cliffs towards Calais, with the liveliest amusement. At first he was startled by the suddenness with which soldiers overran the roads, became billeted in every house, made the bridges red with their trowsers, and "sprang upon the pier like fantastic mustard and cress when boats were expected, many of them never having seen the sea before." But the good behaviour of the men had a reconciling effect, and their ingenuity delighted him. The quickness with which they raised whole streets of mud-huts, less picturesque than the tents,† but (like most unpicturesque things) more comfortable, was like an Arabian Night's tale. "Each little street holds 144 men, and every corner-door has the number of the street upon it as soon as it is put up; and the postmen can fall to work as easily as in the Rue de Rivoli at

* Thackeray and his family were here in the early weeks, living "in a melancholy but very good château on the Paris road, where their landlord (a Baron) has supplied them, T. tells me, with one milk-jug as the entire crockery of the establishment." Our friend soon tired of this, going off to Spa, and on his return, after ascending the hill to smoke a farewell cigar with Dickens, left for London and Scotland in October.

† Another of his letters questioned even the picturesqueness a little, for he discovered that on a sunny day the white tents, seen from a distance, looked exactly like an immense washing establishment with all the linen put out to dry.

Paris." His patience was again a little tried when he found baggage-wagons ploughing up his favourite walks, and trumpeters in twos and threes teaching newly recruited trumpeters in all the sylvan places, and making the echoes hideous. But this had its amusement too. "I met to-day a weazen sunburnt youth from the south with such an immense regimental shako on, that he looked like a sort of lucifer match-box, evidently blowing his life rapidly out, under the auspices of two magnificent creatures all hair and lungs, of such breadth across the shoulders that I couldn't see their breast-buttons when I stood in front of them."

The interest culminated as the visit of the Prince Consort approached with its attendant glories of illuminations and reviews. Beaucourt's excitement became intense. The Villa du Camp de Droite was to be a blaze of triumph on the night of the arrival; Dickens, who had carried over with him the meteor flag of England and set it streaming over a haystack in his field,* now hoisted the French colours over the British Jack in honour of the national alliance; the Emperor was to subside to the station of a general officer, so that all the rejoicings should be in honour of the Prince; and there was to be a review in the open country near Wimereux, when "at one stage of the maneuvres (I am too excited to spell the word but you know what I mean)" the whole hundred thousand men in the camp of the North were to be placed before the Prince's eyes, to show him what a division of the French army might be. "I believe everything I hear," said Dickens. It was the state of mind of Hood's country gentleman after the fire at the Houses of Parliament. "Beaucourt, as one of the town council, receives summonses to turn out and debate about something, or receive somebody, every five minutes. Whenever I look out of window, or go to the door, I see an immense black object at Beaucourt's porch like a boat set up on end in the air with a pair of white trowsers below it. This is the cocked hat of an official Huissier, newly arrived with a summons, whose head is thrown back as he is in the act of drinking Beaucourt's wine." The day came at last, and all Boulogne turned out for its holiday; "but I," Dickens wrote, "had

* "Whence it can be seen for miles and miles, to the glory of England and the joy of Beaucourt."

by this cooled down a little, and, reserving myself for the illuminations, I abandoned the great men and set off upon my usual country walk. See my reward. Coming home by the Calais road, covered with dust, I suddenly find myself face to face with Albert and Napoleon, jogging along in the pleasantest way, a little in front, talking extremely loud about the view, and attended by a brilliant staff of some sixty or seventy horsemen, with a couple of our royal grooms with their red coats riding oddly enough in the midst of the magnates. I took off my wide-awake without stopping to stare, whereupon the Emperor pulled off his cocked hat; and Albert (seeing, I suppose, that it was an Englishman) pulled off his. Then we went our several ways. The Emperor is broader across the chest than in the old times when we used to see him so often at Gore House, and stoops more in the shoulders. Indeed his carriage thereabouts is like Fonblanque's." * The town he described as "one great flag" for the rest of the visit; and to the success of the illuminations he contributed largely himself by leading off splendidly with a hundred and twenty wax candles blazing in his seventeen front windows, and visible from that great height over all the place. "On the first eruption Beaucourt *danced and screamed* on the grass before the door, and when he was more composed, set off with Madame Beaucourt to look at the house from every possible quarter, and, he said, collect the suffrages of his compatriots."

Their suffrages seem to have gone, however, mainly in another direction. "It was wonderful," Dickens wrote, "to behold about the streets the small French soldiers of the line seizing our Guards by the hand and embracing them. It was wonderful, too, to behold the English sailors in the town, shaking hands with everybody and generally patronising everything. When the people could not get hold of either a soldier or a sailor, they rejoiced in the royal grooms, and embraced *them*. I don't think the

* The picture had changed drearily in less than a year and a half, when (17th of February, 1856) Dickens thus wrote from Paris. "I suppose mortal man out of bed never looked so ill and worn as the Emperor does just now. He passed close by me on horseback, as I was coming in at the door on Friday, and I never saw so haggard a face. Some English saluted him, and he lifted his hand to his hat as slowly, painfully, and laboriously, as if his arm were made of lead. I think he *must* be in pain."

Boulogne people were surprised by anything so much, as by the three cheers the crew of the yacht gave when the Emperor went aboard to lunch. The prodigious volume of them, and the precision, and the circumstance that no man was left straggling on his own account either before or afterwards, seemed to strike the general mind with amazement. Beaucourt said it was *like boxing.*" That was written on the 10th of September; but in a very few days Dickens was unwillingly convinced that whatever the friendly disposition to England might be, the war with Russia was decidedly unpopular. He was present when the false report of the taking of Sebastopol reached the Emperor and Empress. "I was at the Review" (8th of October) "yesterday week, very near the Emperor and Empress, when the taking of Sebastopol was announced. It was a magnificent show on a magnificent day; and if any circumstance could make it special, the arrival of the telegraphic dispatch would be the culminating point one might suppose. It quite disturbed and mortified me to find how faintly, feebly, miserably, the men responded to the call of the officers to cheer, as each regiment passed by. Fifty excited Englishmen would make a greater sign and sound than a thousand of these men do. . . . The Empress was very pretty, and her slight figure sat capitally on her grey horse. When the Emperor gave her the dispatch to read, she flushed and fired up in a very pleasant way, and kissed it with as natural an impulse as one could desire to see."

On the night of that day Dickens went up to see a play acted at a café at the camp, and found himself one of an audience composed wholly of officers and men, with only four ladies among them, officers' wives. The steady, working, sensible faces all about him told their own story: "and as to kindness and consideration towards the poor actors, it was real benevolence." Another attraction at the camp was a conjuror, who had been called to exhibit twice before the imperial party, and whom Dickens always afterwards referred to as the most consummate master of legerdemain he had seen. Nor was he a mean authority as to this, being himself, with his tools at hand, a capital conjuror;* but the Frenchman scorned help, stood among

* I permit myself to quote from the bill of one of his entertainments in the old merry days at Bonchurch, of course drawn up by

the company without any sort of apparatus, and, by the mere force of sleight of hand and an astonishing memory, performed feats having no likeness to anything Dickens had ever seen done, and totally inexplicable to his most vigilant reflection. "So far as I know, a perfectly original genius, and that puts any sort of knowledge of legerdemain, such as I supposed that I possessed, at utter defiance." The account he gave dealt with two exploits only, the easiest to describe, and, not being with cards, not the

himself, whom it describes as "The Unparalleled Necromancer RHIA RHAMA RHOOS, educated cabalistically in the Orange Groves of Salamanca and the Ocean Caves of Alum Bay," some of whose proposed wonders it thus prefigures:

THE LEAPING CARD WONDER.

Two Cards being drawn from the pack by two of the company, and placed, with the Pack, in the Necromancer's box, will leap forth at the command of any lady of not less than eight, nor more than eighty, years of age.

*** *This wonder is the result of nine years' seclusion in the mines of Russia.*

THE PYRAMID WONDER.

A shilling being lent to the Necromancer by any gentleman of not less than twelve months, or more than one hundred years, of age, and carefully marked by the said gentleman, will disappear from within a brazen box at the word of command, and pass through the hearts of an infinity of boxes, which will afterwards build themselves into pyramids and sink into a small mahogany box, at the Necromancer's bidding.

*** *Five thousand guineas were paid for the acquisition of this wonder, to a Chinese Mandarin, who died of grief immediately after parting with the secret.*

THE CONFLAGRATION WONDER.

A Card being drawn from the Pack by any lady, not under a direct and positive promise of marriage, will be immediately named by the Necromancer, destroyed by fire, and reproduced from its own ashes.

*** *An annuity of one thousand pounds has been offered to the Necromancer by the Directors of the Sun Fire Office for the secret of this wonder—and refused ! ! !*

THE LOAF OF BREAD WONDER.

The watch of any truly prepossessing lady, of any age, single or married, being locked by the Necromancer in a strong box, will fly at the word of command from within that box into the heart of an

most remarkable; for he would also say of this Frenchman that he transformed cards into very demons. He never saw a human hand touch them in the same way, fling them about so amazingly, or change them in his, one's own, or another's hand, with a skill so impossible to follow.

"You are to observe that he was *with the company*, not in the least removed from them; and that we occupied the front row. He brought in some writing paper with him when he entered, and a black-lead pencil; and he wrote some words on half-sheets of paper. One of these half-sheets he folded into two, and gave to Catherine to hold. Madame, he says aloud, will you think of any class of objects? I have done so.—Of what class, Madame? Animals.—Will you think of a particular animal, Madame? I have done so.—Of what animal? The Lion.—Will you think of another class of objects, Madame? I have done

ordinary half-quartern loaf, whence it shall be cut out in the presence of the whole company, whose cries of astonishment will be audible at a distance of some miles.

*** *Ten years in the Plains of Tartary were devoted to the study of this wonder.*

THE TRAVELLING DOLL WONDER.

The travelling doll is composed of solid wood throughout, but, by putting on a travelling dress of the simplest construction, becomes invisible, performs enormous journeys in half a minute, and passes from visibility to invisibility with an expedition so astonishing that no eye can follow its transformations.

*** *The Necromancer's attendant usually faints on beholding this wonder, and is only to be revived by the administration of brandy and water.*

THE PUDDING WONDER.

The company having agreed among themselves to offer to the Necromancer, by way of loan, the hat of any gentleman whose head has arrived at maturity of size, the Necromancer, without removing that hat for an instant from before the eyes of the delighted company, will light a fire in it, make a plum pudding in his magic saucepan, boil it over the said fire, produce it in two minutes, thoroughly done, cut it, and dispense it in portions to the whole company, for their consumption then and there; returning the hat at last, wholly uninjured by fire, to its lawful owner.

*** *The extreme liberality of this wonder awakening the jealousy of the beneficent Austrian Government; when exhibited in Milan, the Necromancer had the honour to be seized, and confined for five years in the fortress of that city.*

so.—Of what class? Flowers.—The particular flower? The Rose.—Will you open the paper you hold in your hand? She opened it, and there was neatly and plainly written in pencil—*The Lion. The Rose.* Nothing whatever had led up to these words, and they were the most distant conceivable from Catherine's thoughts when she entered the room. He had several common school-slates about a foot square. He took one of these to a field-officer from the camp, *décoré* and what not, who sat about six from us, with a grave saturnine friend next him. My General, says he, will you write a name on this slate, after your friend has done so? Don't show it to me. The friend wrote a name, and the General wrote a name. The conjuror took the slate rapidly from the officer, threw it violently down on the ground with its written side to the floor, and asked the officer to put his foot upon it and keep it there: which he did. The conjuror considered for about a minute, looking devilish hard at the General.—My General, says he, your friend wrote Dagobert, upon the slate under your foot. The friend admits it.—And you, my General, wrote Nicholas. General admits it, and everybody laughs and applauds.—My General, will you excuse me, if I change that name into a name expressive of the power of a great nation, which, in happy alliance with the gallantry and spirit of France will shake that name to its centre? Certainly I will excuse it.—My General, take up the slate and read. General reads: DAGOBERT, VICTORIA. The first in his friend's writing; the second in a new hand. I never saw anything in the least like this; or at all approaching to the absolute certainty, the familiarity, quickness, absence of all machinery, and actual face-to-face, hand-to-hand fairness between the conjuror and the audience, with which it was done. I have not the slightest idea of the secret.—One more. He was blinded with several table napkins, and then a great cloth was bodily thrown over them and his head too, so that his voice sounded as if he were under a bed. Perhaps half a dozen dates were written on a slate. He takes the slate in his hand, and throws it violently down on the floor, as before, remains silent a minute, seems to become agitated, and bursts out thus: 'What is this I see? A great city, but of narrow streets and old-fashioned houses, many of which are of wood, resolving

itself into ruins! How is it falling into ruins? Hark! I hear the crackling of a great conflagration, and, looking up, I behold a vast cloud of flame and smoke. The ground is covered with hot cinders too, and people are flying into the fields and endeavouring to save their goods. This great fire, this great wind, this roaring noise! This is the great fire of London, and the first date upon the slate must be one, six, six, six—the year in which it happened!' And so on with all the other dates. There! Now, if you will take a cab and impart these mysteries to Rogers, I shall be very glad to have his opinion of them." Rogers had taxed our credulity with some wonderful clairvoyant experiences of his own in Paris, to which here was a parallel at last!

When leaving Paris for his third visit to Boulogne, at the beginning of June, 1856, he had not written a word of the ninth number of his new book, and did not expect for another month to "see land from the running sea of 'Little Dorrit.'" He had resumed the house he first occupied, the cottage or villa "des Moulineaux," and after dawdling about his garden for a few days with surprising industry in a French farmer garb of blue blouse, leathern belt, and military cap, which he had mounted as "the only one for complete comfort," he wrote to me that he was getting "Now to work again—to work! The story lies before me, I hope, strong and clear. Not to be easily told; but nothing of that sort is to be easily done that *I* know of." At work it became his habit to sit late, and then, putting off his usual walk until night, to lie down among the roses reading until after tea ("middle-aged Love in a blouse and belt"), when he went down to the pier. "The said pier at evening is a phase of the place we never see, and which I hardly knew. But I never did behold such specimens of the youth of my country, male and female, as pervade that place. They are really, in their vulgarity and insolence, quite disheartening. One is so fearfully ashamed of them, and they contrast so very unfavourably with the natives."

An epidemic broke out in the town, affecting the children of several families known to Dickens, among them that of his friend Mr. Gilbert A'Beckett; who, upon arriving from Paris, and finding a favourite little son

stricken dangerously, sank himself under an illness from which he had been suffering, and died two days after the boy. "He had for three days shown symptoms of rallying, and we had some hope of his recovery; but he sank and died, and never even knew that the child had gone before him. A sad, sad story." Dickens meanwhile had sent his own children home with his wife, and the rest soon followed. Poor M. Beaucourt was inconsolable. "The desolation of the place is wretched. When Mamey and Katey went, Beaucourt came in and wept. He really is almost broken-hearted about it. He had planted all manner of flowers for next month, and has thrown down the spade and left off weeding the garden, so that it looks something like a dreary bird-cage with all manner of grasses and chickweeds sticking through the bars and lying in the sand. 'Such a loss too,' he says, 'for Monsieur Dickens!' Then he looks in at the kitchen window (which seems to be his only relief), and sighs himself up the hill home."

Another word is to be said of this excellent man. The most touching traits recorded of him by Dickens have not had mention here, because they refer to the generosity shown by him to an English family in occupation of another of his houses, in connection with whom his losses must have been considerable, but for whom he had nothing but help and sympathy. Replying to some questions about them, put by Dickens one day, he had only enlarged on their sacrifices and self-denials. "'Ah, that family, unfortunate!' 'And you, Monsieur Beaucourt,' I said to him, 'you are unfortunate too, God knows!' Upon which he said in the pleasantest way in the world, 'Ah, Monsieur Dickens, thank you, don't speak of it!'—And backed himself down the avenue with his cap in his hand, as if he were going to back himself straight into the evening star, without the ceremony of dying first. I never did see such a gentle, kind heart." *

* In an article entitled "Boz and Boulogne," by Deshler Welch, that appeared in "Harper's Magazine" for August, 1908, the reader may find pleasing observations upon this delightful episode in the life of Dickens.—Ed.

XVI.

In Paris [1855–56] Dickens lived among artists, and in the exercise of his own art. His associates were writers, painters, actors, or musicians, and when he wanted relief from any strain of work he found it at the theatre. The years since his last residence in the great city had made him better known, and the increased attentions pleased him. He had to help in preparing for a translation of his books into French; and this, with continued labour at the story he had in hand, occupied him as long as he remained. It will be all best told by extracts from his letters; in which the people he met, the theatres he visited, and the incidents, public or private, that seemed to him worthy of mention, reappear with the old force and liveliness. Nor is anything better worth preserving from them than choice bits of description of an actor or a drama, for this perishable enjoyment has only so much as may survive out of such recollections to witness for itself to another generation; and an unusually high place may be challenged for the subtlety and delicacy of what is said in these letters of things theatrical, when the writer was especially attracted by a performer or a play. Frédéric Lemaître has never had a higher tribute than Dickens paid to him.

"Incomparably the finest acting I ever saw, I saw last night at the Ambigu. They have revived that old piece, once immensely popular in London under the name of 'Thirty Years of a Gambler's Life.' Old Lemaître plays his famous character, and never did I see anything, in art, so exaltedly horrible and awful. In the earlier acts he was so well made up, and so light and active, that he really looked sufficiently young. But in the last two, when he had grown old and miserable, he did the finest things, I really believe, that are within the power of acting. Two or three times, a great cry of horror went all round the house. When he met, in the inn yard, the traveller whom he murders, and first saw his money, the manner in which the crime came into his head—and eyes—was as truthful as it was terrific. This traveller, being

a good fellow, gives him wine. You should see the dim remembrance of his better days that comes over him as he takes the glass, and in a strange dazed way makes as if he were going to touch the other man's, or do some airy thing with it; and then stops and flings the contents down his hot throat, as if he were pouring it into a lime-kiln. But this was nothing to what follows after he has done the murder, and comes home, with a basket of provisions, a ragged pocket full of money, and a badly-washed bloody right hand—which his little girl finds out. After the child asked him if he had hurt his hand, his going aside, turning himself round, and looking over all his clothes for spots, was so inexpressibly dreadful that it really scared one. He called for wine, and the sickness that came upon him when he saw the colour, was one of the things that brought out the curious cry I have spoken of, from the audience. Then he fell into a sort of bloody mist, and went on to the end groping about, with no mind for anything, except making his fortune by staking this money, and a faint dull kind of love for the child. It is quite impossible to satisfy one's self by saying enough of this magnificent performance. I have never seen him come near its finest points, in anything else. He said two things in a way that alone would put him far apart from all other actors. One to his wife, when he has exultingly shewn her the money and she has asked him how he got it—'I found it'—and the other to his old companion and tempter, when he was charged by him with having killed that traveller, and suddenly went headlong mad and took him by the throat and howled out, 'It wasn't I who murdered him—it was Misery!' And such a dress; such a face; and, above all, such an extraordinary guilty wicked thing as he made of a knotted branch of a tree which was his walking-stick, from the moment when the idea of the murder came into his head! I could write pages about him. It is an impression quite ineffaceable. He got half-boastful of that walking-staff to himself, and half-afraid of it; and didn't know whether to be grimly pleased that it had the jagged end, or to hate it and be horrified at it. He sat at a little table in the inn-yard, drinking with the traveller; and this horrible stick got between them like the Devil, while he counted on his fingers the uses he could put the money to."

"Next week we are to have at the Ambigu 'Paradise Lost,' with the murder of Abel, and the Deluge. The wildest rumours are afloat as to the un-dressing of our first parents." He went with Mr. Wilkie Collins. "We were rung in (out of the café below the Ambigu) at eight, and the play was over at half-past 1: the waits between the acts being very much longer than the acts themselves. The house was crammed to excess in every part, and the galleries awful with Blouses, who again, during the whole of the waits, beat with the regularity of military drums the revolutionary tune of famous memory—Ça Ira! The play is a compound of 'Paradise Lost' and Byron's 'Cain,' and some of the controversies between the archangel and the devil, when the celestial power argues with the infernal in conversational French, as 'Eh bien! Satan, crois-tu donc que notre Seigneur t'aurait exposé aux tourments que t'endures à présent, sans avoir prévu,' etc. etc. are very ridiculous. All the supernatural personages are alarmingly natural (as theatre nature goes), and walk about in the stupidest way. Which has occasioned Collins and myself to institute a perquisition whether the French ever have shown any kind of idea of the supernatural; and to decide this rather in the negative. The people are very well dressed, and Eve very modestly. All Paris and the provinces had been ransacked for a woman who had brown hair that would fall to the calves of her legs—and she was found at last at the Odéon. There was nothing attractive until the fourth act, when there was a pretty good scene of the children of Cain dancing in, and desecrating, a temple, while Abel and his family were hammering hard at the Ark, outside, in all the pauses of the revel. The Deluge in the fifth act was up to about the mark of a drowning scene at the Adelphi; but it had one new feature. When the rain ceased, and the ark drove in on the great expanse of water, then lying waveless as the mists cleared and the sun broke out, numbers of bodies drifted up and down. These were all real men and boys, each separate, on a new kind of horizontal sloat. They looked horrible and real. Altogether, a really dull business; but I dare say it will go for a long while."

Great as was the pleasure derived from the theatre, he was, in the matter of social intercourse, even more in-

debted to distinguished men connected with it by authorship or acting. At Scribe's he was entertained frequently; and "very handsome and pleasant" was his account of the dinners, as of all the belongings, of the prolific dramatist —a charming place in Paris, a fine estate in the country, capital carriage, handsome pair of horses, "all made, as he says, by his pen." One of the guests the first evening was Auber, "a stolid little elderly man, rather petulant in manner," who told Dickens he had once lived at "Stock Noonton" (Stoke Newington) to study English, but had forgotten it all. "Louis Philippe had invited him to meet the Queen of England, and when L. P. presented him, the Queen said, 'We are such old acquaintances through M. Auber's works, that an introduction is quite unnecessary.'" They met again a few nights later, with the author of the "History of the Girondins," at the hospitable table of M. Pichot, to whom Lamartine had expressed a strong desire again to meet Dickens as "un des grands amis de son imagination." "He continues to be precisely as we formerly knew him, both in appearance and manner; highly prepossessing, and with a sort of calm passion about him, very taking indeed. We talked of De Foe* and Richardson, and of that wonderful genius for the minutest details in a narrative which has given them so much fame in France. I found him frank and unaffected, and full of curious knowledge of the French

* I subjoin from another of these French letters of later date a remark on "Robinson Crusoe." "You remember my saying to you some time ago how curious I thought it that 'Robinson Crusoe' should be the only instance of an universally popular book that could make no one laugh and could make no one cry. I have been reading it again just now, in the course of my numerous refreshings at these English wells, and I will venture to say that there is not in literature a more surprising instance of an utter want of tenderness and sentiment, than the death of Friday. It is as heartless as 'Gil Blas,' in a very different and far more serious way. But the second part altogether will not bear enquiry. In the second part of 'Don Quixote' are some of the finest things. But the second part of 'Robinson Crusoe" is perfectly contemptible, in the glaring defect that it exhibits the man who was thirty years on that desert island with no visible effect made on his character by that experience. De Foe's women too—Robinson Crusoe's wife for instance—are terrible dull commonplace fellows without breeches; and I have no doubt he was a precious dry and disagreeable article himself—I mean De Foe: not Robinson. Poor dear Goldsmith (I remember as I write) derived the same impression."

common people. He informed the company at dinner that he had rarely met a foreigner who spoke French so easily as your inimitable correspondent, whereat your correspondent blushed modestly, and almost immediately afterwards so nearly choked himself with the bone of a fowl (which is still in his throat), that he sat in torture for ten minutes with a strong apprehension that he was going to make the good Pichot famous by dying like the little Hunchback at his table."

At dinner at Regnier's he met M. Legouvet, in whose tragedy Rachel, after its acceptance, had refused to act Medea; a caprice which had led not only to her condemnation in costs of so much a night until she did act it, but to a quasi rivalry against her by Ristori, who was now on her way to Paris to play it in Italian. To this performance Dickens and Macready subsequently went together, and pronounced it to be hopelessly bad. "In the day entertainments, and little melodrama theatres, of Italy, I have seen the same thing fifty times, only not at once so conventional and so exaggerated. The papers have all been in fits respecting the sublimity of the performance, and the genuineness of the applause—particularly of the bouquets; which were thrown on at the most preposterous times in the midst of agonising scenes, so that the characters had to pick their way among them, and a certain stout gentleman who played King Creon was obliged to keep a wary eye, all night, on the proscenium boxes, and dodge them as they came down. Now Scribe, who dined here next day (and who follows on the Ristori side, being offended, as everybody has been, by the insolence of Rachel), could not resist the temptation of telling us, that, going round at the end of the first act to offer his congratulations, he met all the bouquets coming back in men's arms to be thrown on again in the second act."

Émile de Girardin gave a banquet in his honour. His description of it, which he declares to be strictly prosaic, sounds a little Oriental, but not inappropriately so. "No man unacquainted with my determination never to embellish or fancify such accounts, could believe in the description I shall let off when we meet, of dining at Émile Girardin's—of the three gorgeous drawing rooms

with ten thousand wax candles in golden sconces terminating in a dining-room of unprecedented magnificence with two enormous transparent plate-glass doors in it, looking (across an ante-chamber full of clean plates) straight into the kitchen, with the cooks in their white paper caps dishing the dinner. From his seat in the midst of the table, the host (like a Giant in a Fairy story) beholds the kitchen, and the snow-white tables, and the profound order and silence there prevailing. Forth from the plate-glass doors issues the Banquet—the most wonderful feast ever tasted by mortal: at the present price of Truffles, that article alone costing (for eight people) at least five pounds. On the table are ground glass jugs of peculiar construction, laden with the finest growth of Champagne and the coolest ice. With the third course is issued Port Wine (previously unheard of in a good state on this continent), which would fetch two guineas a bottle at any sale. The dinner done, Oriental flowers in vases of golden cobweb are placed upon the board. With the ice is issued Brandy, buried for 100 years. To that succeeds Coffee, brought by the brother of one of the convives from the remotest East, in exchange for an equal quantity of Californian gold dust. The company being returned to the drawing-room—tables roll in by unseen agency, laden with Cigarettes from the Hareem of the Sultan, and with cool drinks in which the flavour of the Lemon arrived yesterday from Algeria, struggles voluptuously with the delicate Orange arrived this morning from Lisbon. That period past, and the guests reposing on Divans worked with many-coloured blossoms, big table rolls in, heavy with massive furniture of silver, and breathing incense in the form of a little present of Tea direct from China—table and all, I believe; but cannot swear to it, and am resolved to be prosaic. All this time the host perpetually repeats 'Ce petit dîner-ci n'est que pour faire la connaissance de Monsieur Dickens; il ne compte pas; ce n'est rien.' And even now I have forgotten to set down half of it—in particular the item of a far larger plum pudding than ever was seen in England at Christmas time, served with a celestial sauce in colour like the orange blossom, and in substance like the blossom powdered and bathed in dew, and called in the carte (carte in a gold frame like a little fish-slice to be handed about) 'Hommage à

l'illustre écrivain d'Angleterre.' That illustrious man staggered out at the last drawing-room door, speechless with wonder, finally; and even at that moment his host, holding to his lips a chalice set with precious stones and containing nectar distilled from the air that blew over the fields of beans in bloom for fifteen summers, remarked 'Le dîner que nous avons eu, mon cher, n'est rien—il ne compte pas—il a été tout-à-fait en famille—il faut dîner (en vérité, dîner) bientôt. Au plaisir! Au revoir! Au dîner!'"

The French are never wholly apathetic to their own exploits; and a display with a touch of excitement in it had been witnessed on the entry [into Paris] of the troops from the Crimea,* when the Zouaves, as they marched past, pleased Dickens most. "A remarkable body of men," he wrote, "wild, dangerous, and picturesque. Close-cropped head, red skull cap, Greek jacket, full red petticoat trowsers trimmed with yellow, and high white gaiters—the most sensible things for the purpose I know, and coming into use in the line. A man with such things on his legs is always free there, and ready for a muddy march; and might flounder through roads two feet deep in mud, and, simply by changing his gaiters (he has another pair in his haversack), be clean and comfortable and wholesome again, directly. Plenty of beard and moustache, and the musket carried reversewise with the stock over the

* Here is another picture of Regiments in the Streets of which the date is the 30th of January [1856]. "It was cold this afternoon, as bright as Italy, and these Elysian Fields crowded with carriages, riders, and foot passengers. All the fountains were playing, all the Heavens shining. Just as I went out at 4 o'clock, several regiments that had passed out at the Barrière in the morning to exercise in the country, came marching back, in the straggling French manner, which is far more picturesque and real than anything you can imagine in that way. Alternately great storms of drums played, and then the most delicious and skilful bands. 'Trovatore' music, 'Barber of Seville' music, all sorts of music with well-marked melody and time. All bloused Paris (led by the Inimitable, and a poor cripple who works himself up and down all day in a big-wheeled car) went at quick march down the avenue in a sort of hilarious dance. If the colours with the golden eagle on the top had only been unfurled, we should have followed them anywhere, in any cause—much as the children follow Punches in the better cause of Comedy. Napoleon on the top of the Column seemed up to the whole thing, I thought."

shoulder, make up the sun-burnt Zouave. He strides like Bobadil, smoking as he goes; and when he laughs (they were under my window for half-an-hour or so), plunges backward in the wildest way, as if he were going to throw a somersault. They have a black dog belonging to the regiment, and, when they now marched along with their medals, this dog marched after the one non-commissioned officer he invariably follows with a profound conviction that he was decorated. I couldn't see whether he had a medal, his hair being long; but he was perfectly up to what had befallen his regiment; and I never saw anything so capital as his way of regarding the public. Whatever the regiment does, he is always in his place; and it was impossible to mistake the air of modest triumph which was now upon him. A small dog corporeally, but of great mind." On that night there was an illumination in honour of the army, when the "whole of Paris, by-streets and lanes and all sorts of out-of-the-way places, was most brilliantly illuminated. It looked in the dark like Venice and Genoa rolled into one, and split up through the middle by the Corso at Rome in the carnival time. The French people certainly do know how to humour their own countrymen, in a most marvellous way."

XVII.

At the end of August [1857] I had this intimation: "I have arranged with Collins that he and I will start next Monday on a ten or twelve days' expedition to out-of-the-way places, to do (in inns and coast-corners) a little tour in search of an article and in avoidance of railroads." Next day: "Our desicion is for a foray upon the fells of Cumberland; I having discovered in the books some promising moors and black places thereabout." Into the lake-country they went accordingly; and "The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices," contributed to "Household Words," related the trip. But his letters had descriptive touches, and some whimsical experiences, not in the published account.

Looking over "The Beauties of England and Wales,"

Dickens's ambition was fired by mention of Carrick Fell, "a gloomy old mountain 1500 feet high," which he secretly resolved to go up. "We came straight to it yesterday" (9th of September, 1857). "Nobody goes up. Guides have forgotten it. Master of a little inn, excellent north-countryman, volunteered. Went up, in a tremendous rain. C. D. beat Mr. Porter (name of landlord) in half a mile. Mr. P. done up in no time. Three nevertheless went on. Mr. P. again leading; C. D. and C. [Mr. Wilkie Collins] following. Rain terrific, black mists, darkness of night. Mr. P. agitated. C. D. confident. C. (a long way down in perspective) submissive. All wet through. No poles. Not so much as a walking-stick in the party. Reach the summit at about one in the day. Dead darkness as of night. Mr. P. (excellent fellow to the last) uneasy. C. D. produces compass from pocket. Mr. P. reassured. Farmhouse where dog-cart was left, N.N.W. Mr. P. complimentary. Descent commenced. C. D. with compass triumphant, until compass, with the heat and wet of C. D.'s pocket, breaks. Mr. P. (who never had a compass), inconsolable, confesses he has not been on Carrick Fell for twenty years, and he don't know the way down. Darker and darker. Nobody discernible, two yards off, by the other two. Mr. P. makes suggestions, but no way. It becomes clear to C. D. and to C. that Mr. P. is going round and round the mountain, and never coming down. Mr. P. sits on angular granite, and says he is 'just fairly doon.' C. D. revives Mr. P. with laughter, the only restorative in the company. Mr. P. again complimentary. Descent tried once more. Mr. P. worse and worse. Council of war. Proposals from C. D. to go 'slap down.' Seconded by C. Mr. P. objects, on account of precipice called The Black Arches, and terror of the countryside. More wandering. Mr. P. terror-stricken, but game. Watercourse, thundering and roaring, reached. C. D. suggests that it must run to the river, and had best be followed, subject to all gymnastic hazards. Mr. P. opposes, but gives in. Watercourse followed accordingly. Leaps, splashes, and tumbles, for two hours. C. lost. C. D. whoops. Cries for assistance from behind. C. D. returns. C. with horribly sprained ankle, lying in rivulet!"

All the danger was over when Dickens sent his descrip-

tion; but great had been the trouble in binding up the sufferer's ankle and getting him painfully on, shoving, shouldering, carrying alternately, till terra firma was reached. "We got down at last in the wildest place, preposterously out of the course; and, propping up C. against stones, sent Mr. P. to the other side of Cumberland for dog-cart, so got back to his inn, and changed. Shoe or stocking on the bad foot, out of the question. Foot bundled up in a flannel waistcoat. C. D. carrying C. melodramatically everywhere; into and out of carriages; up and down stairs; to bed; every step. And so to Wigton, got doctor, and here we are!! A pretty business, we flatter ourselves!"

[Forster had persistently argued, on various grounds, against the desire of Dickens to undertake paid public readings. In March, 1858, Forster had renewed his remonstrance, to which Dickens made the following reply.]

"Your view of the reading matter I still think is unconsciously taken from your own particular point. You don't seem to me to get out of yourself in considering it. A word more upon it. You are not to think I have made up my mind. If I had, why should I not say so? I find very great difficulty in doing so because of what you urge, because I know the question to be a balance of doubts, and because I most honestly feel in my innermost heart, in this matter (as in all others for years and years), the honour of the calling by which I have always stood most conscientiously. But do you quite consider that the public exhibition of oneself takes place equally, whosoever may get the money? And have you any idea that at this moment—this very time—half the public at least supposes me to be paid? My dear F., out of the twenty or five-and-twenty letters a week that I get about Readings, twenty will ask at what price, or on what terms, it can be done. The only exceptions, in truth, are when the correspondent is a clergyman, or a banker, or the member for the place in question. Why, at this very time half Scotland believes that I am paid for going to Edinburgh!—Here is Greenock writes to me, and asks could it be done for a hundred pounds? There is Aberdeen writes, and states the capacity of its hall, and says, though far less profitable than the very large hall in Edinburgh, is it not enough to come on

for? W. answers such letters continually. (—At this place enter Beale. He called here yesterday morning, and then wrote to ask if I would see him to-day. I replied 'Yes,' so here he came in. With long preface called to know whether it was possible to arrange anything in the way of Readings for this autumn—say, six months. Large capital at command. Could produce partners, in such an enterprise, also with large capital. Represented such. Returns would be enormous. Would I name a sum? a minimum sum that I required to have, in any case? Would I look at it as a Fortune, and in no other point of view? I shook my head, and said, my tongue was tied on the subject for the present; I might be more communicative at another time. Exit Beale in confusion and disappointment.)—You will be happy to hear that at one on Friday, the Lord Provost, Dean of Guild, Magistrates, and Council of the ancient city of Edinburgh will wait (in procession) on their brother freemen, at the Music Hall, to give him hospitable welcome. Their brother freeman has been cursing their stars and his own, ever since the receipt of solemn notification to this effect." But very grateful, when it came, was the enthusiasm of the greeting, and welcome the gift of the silver wassail-bowl which followed the reading of the "Carol." * "I had no opportunity of asking any one's advice in Edinburgh," he wrote on his return. "The crowd was too enormous, and the excitement in it much too great. But my determination is all but taken. I must do *something*, or I shall wear my heart away. I can see no better thing to do that is half so hopeful in itself, or half so well suited to my restless state."

What is pointed at in those last words had been taken as a ground of objection, and thus he turned it into an argument the other way. During all these months many sorrowful misunderstandings had continued in his home, and the relief sought from the misery had but the effect of making desperate any hope of a better understanding. "It becomes necessary," he wrote at the end of March, "with a view to the arrangements that would have to be begun next month if I decided on the Readings, to consider and settle the question of the Plunge. Quite dismiss

* This reading was given on the 9th of April, 1858, for the benefit of the Child's Hospital.—Ed.

from your mind any reference whatever to present circumstances at home. Nothing can put *them* right, until we are all dead and buried and risen. It is not, with me, a matter of will, or trial, or sufferance, or good humour, or making the best of it, or making the worst of it, any longer. It is all despairingly over. Have no lingering hope of, or for, me in this association. A dismal failure has to be borne, and there an end. Will you then try to think of this reading project (as I do) apart from all personal likings and dislikings, and solely with a view to its effect on that particular relation (personally affectionate and like no other man's) which subsists between me and the public? I want your most careful consideration. If you would like, when you have gone over it in your mind, to discuss the matter with me and Arthur Smith (who would manage the whole of the Business, which I should never touch); we will make an appointment. But I ought to add that Arthur Smith plainly says, 'Of the immense return in money, I have no doubt. Of the Dash into the new position, however, I am not so good a judge.'"

Mr. Arthur Smith, a man possessed of many qualities that justified the confidence Dickens placed in him, might not have been a good judge of the "Dash" into the new position, but no man knew better every disadvantage incident to it, or was less likely to be disconcerted by any. His exact fitness to manage the scheme successfully, made him an unsafe counsellor respecting it. Within a week from this time the reading for the Charity was to be given. "They have let," Dickens wrote on the 9th of April, "five hundred stalls for the Hospital night; and as people come every day for more, and it is out of the question to make more, they cannot be restrained at St. Martin's Hall from taking down names for other Readings." This closed the attempt at farther objection. Exactly a fortnight after the reading for the children's hospital, on Thursday the 29th April, came the first public reading for his own benefit; and before the next month was over, this launch into a new life had been followed by a change in his old home. Thenceforward he and his wife lived apart.

XVIII.

"This day," he wrote on the 14th of March, 1856, "I have paid the purchase-money for Gadshill Place. After drawing the cheque (£1790) I turned round to give it to Wills, and said, 'Now isn't it an extraordinary thing—look at the Day—Friday!* I have been nearly drawing it half a dozen times when the lawyers have not been ready, and here it comes round upon a Friday as a matter of course.'" He had no thought at this time of reserving the place wholly for himself, or of making it his own residence except at intervals of summer. He looked upon it as an investment only. "You will hardly know Gadshill again," he wrote in January, 1858, "I am improving it so much—yet I have no interest in the place." But continued ownership brought increased liking; he took more and more interest in his own improvements, which were just the kind of occasional occupation and resource his life most wanted in its next seven or eight years; and any farther idea of letting it he soon abandoned altogether. It only once passed out of his possession thus, for four months in 1859; in the following year, on the sale of Tavistock House, he transferred to it his books and pictures and choicer furniture; and thenceforward, varied only by houses taken from time to time for the London season, he made it his permanent family abode. . . .

All his improvements were not exclusively matters of choice; and to illustrate by his letters what befell at the beginning of his changes, will show what attended them to the close. His earliest difficulty was very grave. There was only one spring of water for gentlefolk and villagers, and from some of the houses or cottages it was two miles away. "We are still" (6th of July) "boring for water here, at the rate of two pounds per day for wages. The men seem to like it very much, and to be perfectly comfortable." Another of his earliest experiences (5th of September) was thus expressed: "Hop-picking is going on, and people sleep in the garden, and breathe in at the keyhole of the house door. I have been amazed, before this year, by the number of miserable lean wretches, hardly able to crawl.

* His "lucky day."—Ed.

who go hop-picking. I find it is a superstition that the dust of the newly picked hop, falling freshly into the throat, is a cure for consumption. So the poor creatures drag themselves along the roads, and sleep under wet hedges, and get cured soon and finally." Towards the close of the same month (24th of September) he wrote: "Here are six men perpetually going up and down the well (I know that somebody will be killed), in the course of fitting a pump; which is quite a railway terminus—it is so iron, and so big. The process is much more like putting Oxford Street endwise, and laying gas along it, than anything else. By the time it is finished, the cost of this water will be something absolutely frightful. But of course it proportionately increases the value of the property, and that's my only comfort. . . . The horse has gone lame from a sprain, the big dog has run a tenpenny nail into one of his hind feet, the bolts have all flown out of the basket-carriage, and the gardener says all the fruit trees want replacing with new ones." Another note came in three days. "I have discovered that the seven miles between Maidstone and Rochester is one of the most beautiful walks in England. Five men have been looking attentively at the pump for a week, and (I should hope) may begin to fit it in the course of October."

Perhaps there was never a man who changed places so much and habits so little. He was always methodical and regular; and passed his life from day to day, divided for the most part between working and walking, the same wherever he was. The only exception was when special or infrequent visitors were with him. When such friends as Longfellow and his daughters, or Charles Eliot Norton and his wife, came, or when Mr. Fields brought his wife and Professor Lowell's daughter, or when he received other Americans to whom he owed special courtesy, he would compress into infinitely few days an enormous amount of sight-seeing and country enjoyment, castles, cathedrals, and fortified lines, lunches and picnics among cherry orchards and hop-gardens, excursions to Canterbury or Maidstone and their beautiful neighbourhoods, Druid Stone and Blue Bell Hill. "All the neighbouring country that could be shown in so short a time," he wrote of the Longfellow visit, "they saw. I turned out a couple

of postilions in the old red jackets of the old red royal Dover road for our ride, and it was like a holiday ride in England fifty years ago." For Lord Lytton he did the same, for the Emerson Tennents, for Mr. Layard and Mr. Helps, for Lady Molesworth and the Higginses (Jacob Omnium), and such other less frequent visitors.

Excepting on such particular occasions, however, and not always even then, his mornings were reserved wholly to himself; and he would generally preface his morning work (such was his love of order in everything around him) by seeing that all was in its place in the several rooms, visiting also the dogs, stables, and kitchen garden, and closing, unless the weather was very bad indeed, with a turn or two round the meadow before settling to his desk. His dogs were a great enjoyment to him, and, with his high road traversed as frequently as any in England by tramps and wayfarers of a singularly undesirable description, they were also a necessity.

XIX.

Dickens gave his paid public readings successively, with not long intervals, at four several dates; in 1858–59, in 1861–63, in 1866–67, and in 1868–70. The first series began with sixteen nights at St. Martin's Hall, the first on the 29th of April, the last on the 22nd of July, 1858; and there was afterwards a provincial tour of 87 readings, beginning at Clifton on the 2nd of August, ending at Brighton on the 13th of November, and taking in Ireland and Scotland as well as the principal English cities: to which were added, in London, three Christmas readings, three in January, with two in the following month; and, in the provinces in the month of October, fourteen, beginning at Ipswich and Norwich, taking in Cambridge and Oxford, and closing with Birmingham and Cheltenham. The series had comprised altogether 125 readings when it ended on the 27th of October, 1859; and without the touches of character and interest afforded by his letters written while thus employed, the picture of the man would not be complete.

Here was one day's work at the opening which will show something of the fatigue they involved even at their outset. "On Friday we came from Shrewsbury to Chester; saw all right for the evening; and then went to Liverpool. Came back from Liverpool and read at Chester. Left Chester at 11 at night, after the reading, and went to London. Got to Tavistock House at 5 A.M. on Saturday; left it at a quarter past 10 that morning, and came down here" (Gadshill: 15th of August, 1858).

The "greatest personal affection and respect" had greeted him everywhere. Nothing could have been "more strongly marked or warmly expressed"; and the readings had "gone" quite wonderfully. What in this respect had most impressed him, at the outset of his adventures, was Exeter. "I think they were the finest audience I ever read to; I don't think I ever read in some respects so well; and I never beheld anything like the personal affection which they poured out upon me at the end. I shall always look back upon it with pleasure." He often lost his voice in these early days, having still to acquire the art of husbanding it; and in the trial to recover it would again waste its power. "I think I sang half the Irish melodies to myself as I walked about, to test it."

An audience of two thousand three hundred people (the largest he had had) greeted him at Liverpool on his way to Dublin, and, besides the tickets sold, more than two hundred pounds in money was taken at the doors. This taxed his business staff a little. "They turned away hundreds, sold all the books, rolled on the ground of my room knee-deep in checks, and made a perfect pantomime of the whole thing." (20th of August.) He had to repeat the reading thrice.

It was the first time he had seen Ireland, and Dublin greatly surprised him by appearing to be so much larger and more populous than he had supposed. He found it to have altogether an unexpectedly thriving look, being pretty nigh as big, he first thought, as Paris; of which some places in it, such as the quays on the river, reminded him. Half the first day he was there, he took to explore it; walking till tired, and then hiring a car. "Power, dressed for the character of Tedy the Tiler, drove me: in a suit of patches, and with his hat unbrushed for twenty years. Wonderfully pleasant, light, intelligent, and care-

less." A letter to his eldest daughter makes humorous addition. "The man who drove our jaunting car yesterday hadn't a piece in his coat as big as a penny roll . . . but he was remarkably intelligent and agreeable, with something to say about everything. When we got into the Phœnix Park, he looked round him as if it were his own, and said, 'THAT's a Park sir, av ye plase!' I complimented it, and he said, 'Gintlemen tills me as they iv bin, sir, over Europe and never see a Park aqualling ov it. Yander's the Vice-regal Lodge, sir; in thim two corners lives the two Sicretaries, wishing I was thim sir. There's air here sir, av yer plase! There's scenery here sir! There's mountains thim sir!'" The number of common people he saw in his drive, also "riding about in cars as hard as they could split," brought to his recollection a more distant scene, and but for the dresses he could have thought himself on the Toledo at Naples.

In respect of the number of his audience, and their reception of him, Dublin was one of his marked successes. He came to have some doubt of their capacity of receiving the pathetic, but of their quickness as to the humorous there could be no question, any more than of their heartiness. He wrote to his sister-in-law: "Every night since I have been in Ireland, they [Irish girls] have beguiled my dresser out of the bouquet from my coat; and yesterday morning, as I had showered the leaves from my geranium in reading 'Little Dombey,' they mounted the platform after I was gone, and picked them all up as a keepsake." The Boots at Morrison's Hotel expressed the general feeling in a patriotic point of view. "He was waiting for me at the hotel door last night. 'Whaat sart of a hoose sur?' he asked me. 'Capital.' 'The Lard be praised fur the 'onour o' Dooblin!'" Within the hotel, on getting up next morning, he had a dialogue with a smaller resident, landlord's son he supposed, a little boy of the ripe age of six, which he presented, in his letter to his sister-in-law, as a colloquy between Old England and Young Ireland inadequately reported for want of the "imitation" it required for its full effect. "I am sitting on the sofa, writing, and find him sitting beside me.

"*Old England.* Holloa, old chap.

"*Young Ireland.* Hal—loo!

"*Old England* (in his delightful way). What a nice old fellow you are. I am very fond of little boys.

"*Young Ireland.* Air, yes? Ye'r right.

"*Old England.* What do you learn, old fellow?

"*Young Ireland* (very intent on Old England, and always childish except in his brogue). I lairn wureds of three sillibils—and wureds of two sillibils—and wureds of one sillibil.

"*Old England* (cheerfully). Get out, you humbug! You learn only words of one syllable.

"*Young Ireland* (laughs heartily). You may say that it is mostly wureds of one sillibil.

"*Old England.* Can you write?

"*Young Ireland.* Not yet. Things comes by deegrays.

"*Old England.* Can you cipher?

"*Young Ireland* (very quickly). Whaat's that?

"*Old England.* Can you make figures?

"*Young Ireland.* I can make a nought, which is not asy, being roond.

"*Old England.* I say, old boy! Wasn't it you I saw on Sunday morning in the hall, in a soldier's cap? You know!—In a soldier's cap?

"*Young Ireland* (cogitating deeply). Was it a very good cap?

"*Old England.* Yes.

"*Young Ireland.* Did it fit ankommon?

"*Old England.* Yes.

"*Young Ireland.* Dat was me!"

The last night in Dublin was an extraordinary scene. "You can hardly imagine it. All the way from the hotel to the Rotunda (a mile), I had to contend against the stream of people who were turned away. When I got there, they had broken the glass in the pay-boxes, and were offering £5 freely for a stall. Half of my platform had to be taken down, and people heaped in among the ruins. You never saw such a scene." "Ladies stood all night with their chins against my platform," he wrote to his daughter. "Other ladies sat all night upon my steps. We turned away people enough to make immense houses for a week." But he would not return after his other Irish engagements. "I have positively said No. The work is too hard. It is not like doing it in one easy room, and always the same room. With a different place every night,

and a different audience with its own peculiarity every night, it is a tremendous strain. . . . I seem to be always either in a railway carriage or reading, or going to bed: and I get so knocked up whenever I have a minute to remember it, that then I go to bed as a matter of course."

Belfast he liked quite as much as Dublin in another way. "A fine place with a rough people; everything looking prosperous; the railway ride from Dublin quite amazing in the order, neatness, and cleanness of all you see; every cottage looking as if it had been whitewashed the day before; and many with charming gardens, prettily kept with bright flowers." The success, too, was quite as great. "Enormous audiences. We turn away half the town. I think them a better audience on the whole than Dublin: and the personal affection is something overwhelming. I wish you and the dear girls" (he is writing to his sister-in-law) "could have seen the people look at me in the street; or heard them ask me, as I hurried to the hotel after the reading last night, to 'do me the honour to shake hands Misther Dickens and God bless you sir; not ounly for the light you've been to me this night, but for the light you've been in mee house sir (and God love your face!) this many a year!'" He had never seen men "go in to cry so undisguisedly," as they did at the Belfast "Dombey" reading; "and as to the Boots and Mrs. Gamp it was just one roar with me and them. For they made me laugh so, that sometimes I *could not* compose my face to go on." His greatest trial in this way, however, was a little later at Harrogate—"the queerest place, with the strangest people in it, leading the oddest lives of dancing, newspaper-reading, and tables d'hôte"—where he noticed, at the same reading, embodiments respectively of the tears and laughter to which he has moved his fellow-creatures so largely. "There was one gentleman at the 'Little Dombey' yesterday morning" (he is still writing to his sister-in-law) "who exhibited—or rather concealed—the profoundest grief. After crying a good deal without hiding it, he covered his face with both his hands and laid it down on the back of the seat before him, and really shook with emotion. He was not in mourning, but I supposed him to have lost some child in old time. . . . There was a remarkably good fellow too, of thirty or so, who found something so very ludicrous in Toots that he *could*

not compose himself at all, but laughed until he sat wiping his eyes with his handkerchief; and whenever he felt Toots coming again, he began to laugh and wipe his eyes afresh; and when Toots came once more, he gave a kind of cry, as if it were too much for him. It was uncommonly droll, and made me laugh heartily."

At Harrogate he read twice on one day (a Saturday), and had to engage a special engine to take him back that night to York, which, having reached at one o'clock in the morning, he had to leave, because of Sunday restrictions on travel, the same morning at half-past four, to enable him to fulfil a Monday's reading at Scarborough. Such fatigues became matters of course; but their effect, not noted at the time, was grave. Here again he was greatly touched by the personal greeting. "I was brought very near to what I sometimes dream may be my Fame," he wrote to me in October from York, "when a lady whose face I had never seen stopped me yesterday in the street, and said to me, *Mr. Dickens, will you let me touch the hand that has filled my house with many friends?*" Of the reading he adds, "I had a most magnificent assemblage, and might have filled the place for a week. . . . I think the audience possessed of a better knowledge of character than any I have seen. But I recollect Doctor Belcombe to have told me long ago that they first found out Charles Mathews's father, and to the last understood him (he used to say) better than any other people. . . . The let is enormous for next Saturday at Manchester, stalls alone four hundred! I shall soon be able to send you the list of places to the 15th of November, the end. I shall be, O most heartily glad, when that time comes! But I must say that the intelligence and warmth of the audiences are an immense sustainment, and one that always sets me up. Sometimes before I go down to read (especially when it is in the day), I am so oppressed by having to do it that I feel perfectly unequal to the task. But the people lift me out of this directly; and I find that I have quite forgotten everything but them and the book, in a quarter of an hour."

XX.

The Uncommercial Traveller papers, his two serial stories, and his Christmas tales, were all the contributions of any importance made by Dickens to "All the Year Round"; but he reprinted in it, on the completion of his first story, a short tale called "Hunted Down," written for a newspaper in America called the "New York Ledger." Its principal claim to notice was the price paid for it. For a story not longer than half of one of the numbers of "Chuzzlewit" or "Copperfield," he had received a thousand pounds.* It was one of the indications of the eager desire which his entry on the career of a public reader had aroused in America to induce him again to visit that continent; and at the very time he had this magnificent offer from the New York journal, Mr. Fields of Boston, who was then on a visit to Europe, was pressing him so much to go that his resolution was almost shaken. "I am now," he wrote to me from Gadshill on the 9th of July, 1859, "getting the 'Tale of Two Cities' into that state that IF I should decide to go to America late in September, I could turn to, at any time, and write on with great vigour. Mr. Fields has been down here for a day, and with the strongest intensity urges that there is no drawback, no commercial excitement or crisis, no political agitation; and that so favourable an opportunity, in all respects, might not occur again for years and years. I should be one of the most unhappy of men if I were to go, and yet I cannot help being much stirred and influenced by the golden prospect held before me."

He yielded nevertheless to other persuasion, and for that time the visit was not to be. In six months more the Civil War began, and America was closed to any such enterprise for nearly five years.

* Eight years later he wrote "Holiday Romance" for a child's magazine published by Mr. Fields, and "George Silverman's Explanation"—of the same length, and for the same price. There are no other such instances, I suppose, in the history of literature.

XXI.

"At Newcastle [Dickens writes—second series of readings, 1861—], against the very heavy expenses, I made more than a hundred guineas profit. A finer audience there is not in England, and I suppose them to be a specially earnest people; for, while they can laugh till they shake the roof, they have a very unusual sympathy with what is pathetic or passionate. An extraordinary thing occurred on the second night. The room was tremendously crowded and my gas-apparatus fell down. There was a terrible wave among the people for an instant, and God knows what destruction of life a rush to the stairs would have caused. Fortunately a lady in the front of the stalls ran out towards me, exactly in a place where I knew that the whole hall could see her. So I addressed her, laughing, and half-asked and half-ordered her to sit down again; and, in a moment, it was all over. But the men in attendance had such a fearful sense of what might have happened (besides the real danger of Fire) that they positively shook the boards I stood on, with their trembling, when they came up to put things right. I am proud to record that the gas-man's sentiment, as delivered afterwards, was, 'The more you want of the master, the more you'll find in him.' With which complimentary homage, and with the wind blowing so that I can hardly hear myself write, I conclude."

Enthusiastic greeting awaited him in Edinburgh. "We had in the hall exactly double what we had on the first night last time. The success of 'Copperfield' was perfectly unexampled. Four great rounds of applause with a burst of cheering at the end, and every point taken in the finest manner." But this was nothing to what befell on the second night, when, by some mistake of the local agents, the tickets issued were out of proportion to the space available. Writing from Glasgow next day (3rd of December) he described the scene. "Such a pouring of hundreds into a place already full to the throat, such indescribable confusion, such a rending and tearing of dresses, and yet such a scene of good humour on the whole, I never saw the faintest approach to. While I addressed the crowd in the room, G. addressed the crowd in the street. Fifty

frantic men got up in all parts of the hall and addressed me all at once. Other frantic men made speeches to the walls. The whole B. family were borne in on the top of a wave, and landed with their faces against the front of the platform. I read with the platform crammed with people. I got them to lie down upon it, and it was like some impossible tableau or gigantic picnic—one pretty girl in full dress, lying on her side all night, holding on to one of the legs of my table! It was the most extraordinary sight. And yet, from the moment I began to the moment of my leaving off, they never missed a point, and they ended with a burst of cheers. . . . The expenditure of lungs and spirits was (as you may suppose) rather great; and to sleep well was out of the question. I am therefore rather fagged to-day; and as the hall in which I read to-night is a large one, I must make my letter a short one. . . . My people were torn to ribbons last night. They have not a hat among them—and scarcely a coat."

XXII.

Dickens had begun his last story ["Our Mutual Friend"], and through unwonted troubles, in this [1864] and the following year, he had to fight his way. What otherwise during its progress chiefly interested him, was the enterprise of Mr. Fechter at the Lyceum, of which he had become the lessee; and Dickens was moved to this quite as much by generous sympathy with the difficulties of such a position to an artist who was not an Englishman, as by genuine admiration of Mr. Fechter's acting. He became his helper in disputes, adviser on literary points, referee in matters of management; and for some years no face was more familiar than the French comedian's at Gadshill or in the office of his journal. But theatres and their affairs are things of a season, and even Dickens's whim and humour will not revive for us any interest in these. No bad example, however, of the difficulties in which a French actor may find himself with English playwrights, will appear in a few amusing words from one of his letters about a piece played at the

[illegible] before the Lyceum management was taken [illegible] and

“I have been continually hearing about the [illegible] which he gave the plot and scene [illegible] I, an [illegible] which must seem enormous in accounts of what he [illegible] amuse you. It has one of the [illegible] ever saw: but it is [illegible] with the last two, no [illegible] say three, there are [illegible] are the [illegible] coming about. When I went over the [illegible] this day week, it was at least 20 minutes [illegible] the last scene discussing with another gentleman [illegible] whether he should kill him or not; after which the gentleman dived overboard and swam [illegible]. So, in the most important and dangerous part of the [illegible] there was a young person of the name of Pierre who was constantly being mentioned by name in connection with the powers of light or darkness, as ‘Great Heaven! Pierre!’ ‘By Heaven! 'tis Pierre!’—‘Pierre! a thousand Devils!’ ‘Distraction! Pierre!’”

The old year ended and the new one opened sadly enough. The death of Leech in November affected Dickens very much, and a severe attack of illness in February put a broad mark between the past life and what remained to him of the future. The lameness now began in his left foot which never afterwards wholly left him, which was attended by great suffering, and which baffled experienced physicians. He had persisted in his ordinary exercise during heavy snow-storms, and to the last he had the fancy that the illness was merely local. But that this was an error is now certain; and it is more than probable that if the nervous danger and disturbance it implied had been correctly appreciated at the time, its warning might have been of priceless value to Dickens. Unhappily, he never thought of husbanding his strength except for the purpose of making fresh demands upon it.

XXIII.

The temptation of offers from America had again been presented to him so strongly, and in such unlucky connection with immediate family claims threatening

excess of expenditure even beyond the income he was making, that he was fain to write to his sister-in-law "I begin to feel myself drawn towards America as Darnay in the 'Tale of Two Cities' was attracted to Paris. It is my Loadstone Rock." Too surely it was to be so; and Dickens was not to be saved from the consequence of yielding to the temptation, by any such sacrifice as had rescued Darnay.

"It is curious" (20th May, 1867) "that you should touch the American subject, because I must confess that my mind is in a most disturbed state about it. That the people there have set themselves on having the readings, there is no question. Every mail brings me proposals, and the number of Americans at St. James's Hall has been surprising. A certain Mr. Grau, who took Ristori out, and is highly responsible, wrote to me by the last mail (for the second time) saying that if I would give him a word of encouragement he would come over immediately and arrange on the boldest terms for any number I chose, and would deposit a large sum of money at Coutts's. Mr. Fields writes to me on behalf of a committee of private gentlemen at Boston who wished for the credit of getting me out, who desired to hear the readings and did not want profit, and would put down as a guarantee £10,000—also to be banked here. Every American speculator who comes to London repairs straight to Dolby,* with similar proposals." Upon the mere question of these various offers he had little difficulty in making up his mind. If he went at all, he would go on his own account, making no compact with any one. Whether he should go at all, was what he had to determine.

One way at last seemed to open by which it was possible to get at some settled opinion. "Dolby sails for America" (2nd of July) "on Saturday the 3rd of August. It is impossible to come to any reasonable conclusion, without sending eyes and ears on the actual ground. He will take out my MS. for the 'Children's Magazine.' I hope it is droll, and very childlike; though the joke is a grown-up one besides. You must try to like the pirate story, for I am very fond of it." The allusion is to his pleasant "Holiday Romance" which he had written for Mr. Fields.

Hardly had Mr. Dolby gone when there came that

* Mr. George Dolby was now Dickens's manager.—Ed.

which should have availed to dissuade, far more than any of the arguments which continued to express my objection to the enterprise. "I am laid up," he wrote on the 6th of August, "with another attack in my foot, and was on the sofa all last night in tortures. I cannot bear to have the fomentations taken off for a moment. I was so ill with it on Sunday, and it looked so fierce, that I came up to Henry Thompson. He has gone into the case heartily, and says that there is no doubt the complaint originates in the action of the shoe, in walking, on an enlargement in the nature of a bunion. Erysipelas has supervened upon the injury; and the object is to avoid a gathering, and to stay the erysipelas where it is. Meantime I am on my back, and chafing. . . . I didn't improve my foot by going down to Liverpool to see Dolby off, but I have little doubt of its yielding to treatment, and repose." A few days later he was chafing still; the accomplished surgeon he consulted having dropped other hints that somewhat troubled him. "I could not walk a quarter of a mile to-night for £500. I make out so many reasons against supposing it to be gouty that I really do not think it is."

So momentous in my judgment were the consequences of the American journey to him that it seemed right to preface thus much of the inducements and temptations that led to it. My own part in the discussion was that of steady dissuasion throughout: though this might perhaps have been less persistent if I could have reconciled myself to the belief, which I never at any time did, that public readings were a worthy employment for a man of his genius. But it had by this time become clear to me that nothing could stay the enterprise. The result of Mr. Dolby's visit to America—drawn up by Dickens himself in a paper possessing still the interest of having given to the readings when he crossed the Atlantic much of the form they then assumed *—reached me when I was stay-

* This renders it worth preservation in a note. He called it

"THE CASE IN A NUTSHELL.

"1. I think it may be taken as proved, that general enthusiasm and excitement are awakened in America on the subject of the Readings, and that the people are prepared to give me a great reception. The 'New York Herald,' indeed, is of opinion that 'Dickens must apologise first'; and where a 'New York Herald' is

ing at Ross; and upon it was founded my last argume against the scheme. This he received in London on t 28th of September, on which day he thus wrote to l

possible, anything is possible. But the prevailing tone, both of t press and of people of all conditions, is highly favourable. I ha an opinion myself that the Irish element in New York is dangerou for the reason that the Fenians would be glad to damage a co spicuous Englishman. This is merely an opinion of my own.

"2. All our original calculations were based on 100 Reading But an unexpected result of careful enquiry on the spot, is the di covery that the month of May is generally considered (in the larg cities) bad for such a purpose. Admitting that what governs a ordinary case in this wise, governs mine, this reduces the Reading to 80, and consequently at a blow makes a reduction of 20 per cent in the means of making money within the half year—unless th objection should not apply in my exceptional instance.

"3. I dismiss the consideration that the great towns of America could not possibly be exhausted—or even visited—within six months, and that a large harvest would be left unreaped. Because I hold a second series of Readings in America is to be set down as out of the question: whether regarded as involving two more voyages across the Atlantic, or a vacation of five months in Canada.

"4. The narrowed calculation we have made, is this: What is the largest amount of clear profit derivable under the most advantageous circumstances possible, as to their public reception, from 80 readings and no more? In making this calculation, the expenses have been throughout taken on the New York scale—which is the dearest; as much as 20 per cent. has been deducted for management, including Mr. Dolby's commission; and no credit has been taken for any extra payment on reserved seats, though a good deal of money is confidently expected from this source. But on the other hand it is to be observed that four Readings (and a fraction over) are supposed to take place every week, and that the estimate of receipts is based on the assumption that the audiences are, on all occasions, as large as the rooms will reasonably hold.

"5. So considering 80 Readings, we bring out the nett profit of that number, remaining to me after payment of all charges whatever, as £15,500.

"6. But it yet remains to be noted that the calculation assumes New York City, and the State of New York, to be good for a very large proportion of the 80 Readings; and that the calculation also assumes the necessary travelling not to extend beyond Boston and adjacent places, New York City and adjacent places, Philadelphia, Washington, and Baltimore. But, if the calculation should prove too sanguine on this head, and if these places should *not* be good for so many Readings, then it may prove impracticable to get through 80 within the time: by reason of other places that would come into the list, lying wide asunder, and necessitating long and fatiguing journeys.

"7. The loss consequent on the conversion of paper money into gold (with gold at the present ruling premium) is allowed for in the calculation. It counts seven dollars in the pound."

eldest daughter: "As I telegraphed after I saw you, I am off to Ross to consult with Mr. Forster and Dolby together. You shall hear, either on Monday, or by Monday's post from London, how I decide finally." The result he wrote to her three days later: "You will have had my telegram that I go to America. After a long discussion with Forster, and consideration of what is to be said on both sides, I have decided to go through with it. We have telegraphed 'Yes' to Boston." Seven days later he wrote to me: "The Scotia being full, I do not sail until lord mayor's day; for which glorious anniversary I have engaged an officer's cabin on deck in the Cuba. I am not in very brilliant spirits at the prospect before me, and am deeply sensible of your motive and reasons for the line you have taken; but I am not in the least shaken in the conviction that I could never quite have given up the idea."

The remaining time was given to preparations; on the 2nd of November there was a Farewell Banquet in the Freemasons' Hall over which Lord Lytton presided; and on the 9th Dickens sailed for Boston.

XXIV.

On the night of Tuesday the 19th of November, 1867, he arrived at Boston, where he took up his residence at the Parker House hotel; and his first letter (21st) stated that the tickets for the first four readings, all to that time issued, had been sold immediately on their becoming saleable. "An immense train of people waited in the freezing street for twelve hours, and passed into the office in their turns, as at a French theatre. The receipts already taken for these nights exceed our calculation by more than £250." Up to the last moment, he had not been able to clear off wholly a shade of misgiving that some of the old grudges might make themselves felt; but from the instant of his setting foot in Boston not a vestige of such fear remained. The greeting was to the full as extraordinary as that of twenty-five years before, and was given now, as then, to the man who had made himself the most

popular writer in the country. His novels and tales crowding the shelves of all the dealers in books in all cities of the Union. In every house, in every car, on e steamboat, in every theatre of America, the characters, fancies, the phraseology of Dickens were become fam beyond those of any other writer of books. "Even England," said one of the New York journals, "Dick is less known than here; and of the millions here treasure every word he has written, there are tens thousands who would make a large sacrifice to see hear the man who has made happy so many hours. Wh ever sensitiveness there once was to adverse or sneeri criticism, the lapse of a quarter of a century, and the pr found significance of a great war, have modified or r moved." The point was more pithily, and as truly, pu by Mr. Horace Greeley in the "Tribune." "The fam as a novelist which Mr. Dickens had already created i America, and which, at the best, has never yielded hin anything particularly munificent or substantial, is become his capital stock in the present enterprise."

The first reading was appointed for the second of December, and in the interval he saw some old friends and made some new ones.* Boston he was fond of comparing to Edinburgh as Edinburgh was in the days when several dear friends of his own still lived there. Twenty-

* Among these I think he was most delighted with the great naturalist and philosopher, Agassiz. "Agassiz, who married the last Mrs. Felton's sister, is not only one of the most accomplished but the most natural and jovial of men." Again he says: "I cannot tell you how pleased I was by Agassiz, a most charming fellow, or how I have regretted his seclusion for a while by reason of his mother's death." A valued correspondent, Mr. Grant Wilson, sends me a list of famous Americans who greeted Dickens at his first visit, and in the interval had passed away. "It is melancholy to contemplate the large number of American authors who had, between the first and second visits of Mr. Dickens, gone hence, to be no more seen." The sturdy Cooper, the gentle Irving, his friend and kinsman Paulding, Prescott the historian and Percival the poet, the eloquent Everett, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar A. Poe, N. P. Willis, the genial Halleck, and many lesser lights, including Prof. Felton and Geo. P. Morris, had died during the quarter of a century that elapsed between Dickens's visits to this country, leaving a new generation of writers to extend the hand of friendship to him on his second coming."—Let me add to this that Dickens was pleased, at this second visit, to see his old secretary who had travelled so agreeably through his first tour of triumph.

five years had changed much in the American city; some genial faces were gone, and on ground which he had left a swamp he found now the most princely streets; but there was no abatement of the old warmth of kindness, and, with every attention and consideration shown to him, there was no intrusion. He was not at first completely conscious of the change in this respect, or of the prodigious increase in the size of Boston. But the latter grew upon him from day to day, and then there was impressed along with it a contrast to which it was difficult to reconcile himself. Nothing enchanted him so much as what he again saw of the delightful domestic life of Cambridge, simple, self-respectful, cordial, and affectionate; and it seemed impossible to believe that within half an hour's distance of it should be found what might at any time be witnessed in such hotels as that which he was staying at: crowds of swaggerers, loafers, bar-loungers, and dram-drinkers, that seemed to be making up, from day to day, not the least important part of the human life of the city. But no great mercantile resort in the States, such as Boston had now become, could be without that drawback; and fortunate should we account any place to be, though even so plague-afflicted, that has yet so near it the healthier influence of the other life which our older world has well-nigh lost altogether.

"The city has increased prodigiously in twenty-five years," he wrote to his daughter Mary. "It has grown more mercantile. It is like Leeds mixed with Preston, and flavoured with New Brighton. Only, instead of smoke and fog, there is an exquisitely bright light air." "Cambridge is exactly as I left it," he wrote to me. "Boston more mercantile, and much larger. The hotel I formerly stayed at, and thought a very big one, is now regarded as a very small affair. I do not yet notice—but a day, you know, is not a long time for observation!—any marked change in character or habits. In this immense hotel I live very high up, and have a hot and cold bath in my bedroom, with other comforts not in existence in my former day. The cost of living is enormous."

On Monday the second of December he read for the first time in Boston, his subjects being the "Carol" and the "Trial from Pickwick"; and his reception, from an audience than which perhaps none more remarkable could

have been brought together, went beyond all expectations formed. "It is really impossible," he wrote to me next morning, "to exaggerate the magnificence of the reception or the effect of the reading. The whole city will talk of nothing else and hear of nothing else to-day. Every ticket for those announced here, and in New York, is sold. All are sold at the highest price, for which in our calculation we made no allowance; and it is impossible to keep out speculators who immediately sell at a premium. At the decreased rate of money even, we had above £450 English in the house last night; and the New York hall holds 500 people more. Everything looks brilliant beyond the most sanguine hopes, and I was quite as cool last night as though I were reading at Chatham." The next night he read again; and also on Thursday and Friday; on Wednesday he had rested; and on Saturday he travelled to New York.

He had written, the day before he left, that he was making a clear profit of thirteen hundred pounds English a week, even allowing seven dollars to the pound; but words were added having no good omen in them, that the weather was taking a turn of even unusual severity, and that he found the climate, in the suddenness of its changes, "and the wide leaps they take," excessively trying. "The work is of course rather trying too; but the sound position that everything must be subservient to it enables me to keep aloof from invitations. To-morrow," ran the close of the letter, "we move to New York. We cannot beat the speculators in our tickets. We sell no more than six to any one person for the course of four readings; but these speculators, who sell at greatly increased prices and make large profits, will employ any number of men to buy. One of the chief of them—now living in this house, in order that he may move as we move!—can put on fifty people in any place we go to; and thus he gets 300 tickets into his own hands." Almost while Dickens was writing these words an eye-witness was describing to a Philadelphia paper the sale of the New York tickets. The pay place was to open at nine on a Wednesday morning, and at midnight of Tuesday a long line of speculators were assembled in *queue*; at two in the morning a few honest buyers had begun to arrive; at five there were, of all classes, two lines of not less than 800 each; at eight there were at least 5000

persons in the two lines; at nine each line was more than three-quarters of a mile in length, and neither became sensibly shorter during the whole morning. "The tickets for the course were all sold before noon. Members of families relieved each other in the *queues*; waiters flew across the streets and squares from the neighbouring restaurant, to serve parties who were taking their breakfast in the open December air; while excited men offered five and ten dollars for the mere permission to exchange places with other persons standing nearer the head of the line!"

The effect of the reading in New York corresponded with this marvellous preparation, and Dickens characterised his audience as an unexpected support to him; in its appreciation quick and unfailing, and highly demonstrative in its satisfactions. On the 11th of December he wrote to his daughter: "Amazing success. A very fine audience, far better than at Boston. 'Carol' and 'Trial' on first night, great: still greater, 'Copperfield' and 'Bob Sawyer' on second. For the tickets of the four readings of next week there were, at nine o'clock this morning, 3000 people in waiting, and they had begun to assemble in the bitter cold as early as two o'clock in the morning." To myself he wrote on the 15th, adding touches to the curious picture. "Dolby has got into trouble about the manner of issuing the tickets for next week's series. He cannot get four thousand people into a room holding only two thousand, he cannot induce people to pay at the ordinary price for themselves instead of giving thrice as much to speculators, and he is attacked in all directions. . . . I don't much like my hall, for it has two large balconies far removed from the platform; but no one ever waylays me as I go into it or come out of it, and it is kept as rigidly quiet as the Français at a rehearsal. We have not yet had in it less than £430 per night, allowing for the depreciated currency! I send £3000 to England by this packet. From all parts of the States, applications and offers continually come in. We go to Boston next Saturday for two more readings, and come back here on Christmas Day for four more. I am not yet bound to go elsewhere, except three times, each time for two nights, to Philadelphia; thinking it wisest to keep free for the largest places. I have had an action brought against me

by a man who considered himself injured (and really may have been) in the matter of his tickets. Personal service being necessary, I was politely waited on by a marshal for that purpose; whom I received with the greatest courtesy, apparently very much to his amazement. The action was handsomely withdrawn next day, and the plaintiff paid his own costs. . . . Dolby hopes you are satisfied with the figures so far; the profit each night exceeding the estimated profit by £130 odd. He is anxious I should also tell you that he is the most unpopular and best-abused man in America."

"The railways are truly alarming. Much worse (because more worn I suppose) than when I was here before. We were beaten about yesterday, as if we had been aboard the Cuba. Two rivers have to be crossed, and each time the whole train is banged aboard a big steamer. The steamer rises and falls with the river, which the railroad don't do; and the train is either banged uphill or banged downhill. In coming off the steamer at one of these crossings yesterday, we were banged up such a height that the rope broke, and one carriage rushed back with a run downhill into the boat again. I whisked out in a moment, and two or three others after me; but nobody else seemed to care about it. The treatment of the luggage is perfectly outrageous. Nearly every case I have is already broken. When we started from Boston yesterday, I beheld, to my unspeakable amazement, Scott, my dresser, leaning a flushed countenance against the wall of the car, and *weeping bitterly*. It was over my smashed writing-desk. Yet the arrangements for luggage are excellent if the porters would not be beyond description reckless.

"The halls are excellent. Imagine one holding two thousand people, seated with exact equality for every one of them, and every one seated separately. I have nowhere, at home or abroad, seen so fine a police as the police of New York; and their bearing in the streets is above all praise. On the other hand, the laws for regulation of public vehicles, clearing of streets, and removal of obstructions, are wildly outraged by the people for whose benefit they are intended. Yet there is undoubtedly improvement in every direction, and I am taking time to make up my mind on things in general. Let me add that I have been

tempted out at three in the morning to visit one of the large police station-houses, and was so fascinated by the study of a horrible photograph-book of thieves' portraits that I couldn't shut it up."

"A good specimen of the sort of newspaper you and I know something of, came out in Boston here this morning. The editor had applied for our advertisements, saying that 'it was at Mr. D.'s disposal for paragraphs.' The advertisements were not sent; Dolby did not enrich its columns paragraphically; and among its news to-day is the item that 'this chap calling himself Dolby got drunk down town last night, and was taken to the police station for fighting an Irishman!' I am sorry to say that I don't find anybody to be much shocked by this liveliness." It is right to add what was said to me a few days later. "The 'Tribune' is an excellent paper. Horace Greeley is editor in chief, and a considerable shareholder too. All the people connected with it whom I have seen are of the best class. It is also a very fine property—but here the 'New York Herald' beats it hollow, hollow, hollow! Another able and well-edited paper is the 'New York Times.' A most respectable journal too is Bryant's 'Evening Post,' excellently written. There is generally a much more responsible and respectable tone than prevailed formerly, however small may be the literary merit, among papers pointed out to me as of large circulation. In much of the writing there is certainly improvement, but it might be more widely spread."

An incident at Boston should have mention. In the interval since he was first in America, the Harvard professor of chemistry, Dr. Webster, whom he had at that visit met among the honoured men who held chairs in their Cambridge University, had been hanged for the murder, committed in his laboratory in the college, of a friend who had lent him money, portions of whose body lay concealed under the lid of the lecture-room table where the murderer continued to meet his students. "Being in Cambridge," Dickens wrote to Lord Lytton, "I thought I would go over the Medical School, and see the exact localities where Professor Webster did that amazing murder, and worked so hard to rid himself of the body of the

murdered man. (I find there is of course no rational doubt that the Professor was always a secretly cruel man.) They were horribly grim, private, cold, and quiet; the identical furnace smelling fearfully (some anatomical broth in it I suppose) as if the body were still there; jars of pieces of sour mortality standing about, like the forty robbers in 'Ali Baba' after being scalded to death; and bodies near us ready to be carried in to next morning's lecture. At the house where I afterwards dined I heard an amazing and fearful story; told by one who had been at a dinner-party of ten or a dozen, at Webster's, less than a year before the murder. They began rather uncomfortably, in consequence of one of the guests (the victim of an instinctive antipathy) starting up with the sweat pouring down his face, and crying out, 'O Heaven! There's a cat somewhere in the room!' The cat was found and ejected, but they didn't get on very well. Left with their wine, they were getting on a little better; when Webster suddenly told the servants to turn the gas off and bring in that bowl of burning minerals which he had prepared, in order that the company might see how ghastly they looked by its weird light. All this was done, and every man was looking, horror-stricken, at his neighbour; when Webster was seen bending over the bowl with a rope round his neck, holding up the end of the rope, with his head on one side and his tongue lolled out, to represent a hanged man!"

Dickens read at Boston on the 23rd and the 24th of December, and on Christmas day travelled back to New York where he was to read on the 26th. The last words written before he left were of illness. "The low action of the heart, or whatever it is, has inconvenienced me greatly this last week. On Monday night, after the reading, I was laid upon a bed, in a very faint and shady state; and on the Tuesday I did not get up till the afternoon." But what in reality was less grave took outwardly the form of a greater distress; and the effects of the cold which had struck him in travelling to Boston, as yet not known to his English friends, appear most to have alarmed those about him. A business connection with the readings, as well as untiring offices of personal kindness and sympathy, drew Mr. Fields into closer relations with Dickens from [illegible]l to departure, than any other person had; and his

description of the condition of health in which Dickens now quitted Boston and went through the rest of the labour he had undertaken [is as follows]: "He went from Boston to New York carrying with him a severe catarrh contracted in our climate. He was quite ill from the effects of the disease; but he fought courageously against them. . . . His spirit was wonderful, and, although he lost all appetite and could partake of very little food, he was always cheerful and ready for his work when the evening came round. A dinner was tendered to him by some of his literary friends in Boston; but he was so ill the day before that the banquet had to be given up. The strain upon his strength and nerves was very great during all the months he remained, and only a man of iron will could have accomplished what he did. He was accustomed to talk and write a good deal about eating and drinking, but I have rarely seen a man eat and drink less. He liked to dilate in imagination over the brewing of a bowl of punch, but when the punch was ready he drank less of it than any one who might be present. It was the sentiment of the thing and not the thing itself that engaged his attention. I scarcely saw him eat a hearty meal during his whole stay. Both at Parker's hotel in Boston, and at the Westminster in New York, everything was arranged by the proprietors for his comfort, and tempting dishes to pique his invalid appetite were sent up at different hours of the day; but the influenza had seized him with masterful power, and held the strong man down till he left the country."

On the last day of the year he announced to us that though he had been very low he was getting right again; that in a couple of days he should have accomplished a fourth of the entire readings; and that the first month of the new year would see him through Philadelphia and Baltimore, as well as through two more nights in Boston. He also prepared his English friends for the startling intelligence they might shortly expect, of four readings coming off in a church, before an audience of two thousand people accommodated in pews, and with himself emerging from a vestry.

Light was thrown on the ecclesiastical mystery. "At Brooklyn I am going to read in Mr. Ward Beecher's

chapel: * the only building there available for the purpose. You must understand that Brooklyn is a kind of sleeping-place for New York, and is supposed to be a great place in the money way. We let the seats pew by pew! the pulpit is taken down for my screen and gas! and I appear out of the vestry in canonical form! Each evening an enormous ferry-boat will convey me and my state-carriage (not to mention half a dozen wagons and any number of people and a few score of horses) across the river to Brooklyn, and will bring me back again. The sale of tickets there was an amazing scene. The noble army of speculators are now furnished (this is literally true, and I am quite serious) each man with a straw mattress, a little bag of bread and meat, two blankets, and a bottle of whiskey. With this outfit, *they lie down in line on the pavement* the whole of the night before the tickets are sold: generally taking up their position at about 10. It being severely cold at Brooklyn, they made an immense bonfire in the street—a narrow street of wooden houses—which the police turned out to extinguish. A general fight then took place; from which the people farthest off in the line rushed bleeding when they saw any chance of ousting others nearer the door, put their mattresses in the spots so gained, and held on by the iron rails. At eight in the morning Dolby appeared with the tickets in a portmanteau. He was immediately saluted with a roar of 'Halloa! Dolby! So Charley has let you have the carriage, has he, Dolby? How is he, Dolby? Don't drop the tickets, Dolby! Look alive, Dolby!' etc. etc. etc. in the midst of which he proceeded to business, and concluded (as usual) by giving universal dissatisfaction. He is now going off upon a little journey to look over the ground and cut back again. This little journey (to Chicago) is twelve hundred miles on end, by railway, besides the back again!" It might tax the Englishman, but was nothing to the native American. It was part of his New York landlord's ordinary life in a week, Dickens told me, to go to Chicago and look at his theatre there on a Monday; to pelt back to Boston and look at his theatre there on a Thursday; and to come rushing to New York on a Friday, to apostrophise his enormous ballet.

* Plymouth Church.—Ed.

That he was unfortunate in his time of visiting New York, as far as its politics were concerned, what has since happened conclusively shows. . . . "The general corruption in respect of the local funds appears to be stupendous, and there is an alarming thing as to some of the courts of law which I am afraid is native-born. A case came under my notice the other day in which it was perfectly plain, from what was said to me by a person interested in resisting an injunction, that his first proceeding had been to 'look up the Judge.'" Of such occasional provincial oddity, harmless in itself but strange in large cities, as he noticed in the sort of half disappointment at the small fuss made by himself about the readings, and in the newspaper references to "Mr. Dickens's extraordinary composure" on the platform, he gives an illustration. "Last night [13th of January, 1868] here in Philadelphia (my first night), a very impressible and responsive audience were so astounded by my simply walking in and opening my book that I wondered what was the matter. They evidently thought that there ought to have been a flourish, and Dolby sent in to prepare for me. With them it is the simplicity of the operation that raises wonder. With the newspapers 'Mr. Dickens's extraordinary composure' is not reasoned out as being necessary to the art of the thing, but is sensitively watched with a lurking doubt whether it may not imply disparagement of the audience. Both these things strike me as drolly expressive."

His testimony as to improved social habits and ways was expressed very decidedly. "I think it reasonable to expect that as I go westward, I shall find the old manners going on before me, and may tread upon their skirts mayhap. But so far, I have had no more intrusion or boredom than I have when I lead the same life in England. I write this in an immense hotel, but I am as much at peace in my own rooms, and am left as wholly undisturbed, as if I were at the Station Hotel in York. I have now read in New York city to 40,000 people, and am quite as well known in the streets there as I am in London. People will turn back, turn again and face me, and have a look at me, or will say to one another 'Look here! Dickens coming!' But no one ever stops me or addresses me. Sitting reading in the carriage outside the New York

post-office while one of the staff was stamping the letters inside, I became conscious that a few people who had been looking at the turnout had discovered me within. On my peeping out good-humouredly, one of them (I should say a merchant's book-keeper) stepped up to the door, took off his hat, and said in a frank way: 'Mr. Dickens, I should very much like to have the honour of shaking hands with you'—and, that done, presented two others. Nothing could be more quiet or less intrusive. In the railway cars, if I see anybody who clearly wants to speak to me, I usually anticipate the wish by speaking myself. If I am standing on the brake outside (to avoid the intolerable stove), people getting down will say with a smile: 'As I am taking my departure, Mr. Dickens, and can't trouble you for more than a moment, I should like to take you by the hand sir.' And so we shake hands and go our ways. . . . Of course many of my impressions come through the readings. Thus I find the people lighter and more humorous than formerly; and there must be a great deal of innocent imagination among every class, or they never could pet with such extraordinary pleasure as they do, the Boots's story of the elopment of the two little children. They seem to see the children; and the women set up a shrill undercurrent of half-pity and half-pleasure that is quite affecting. To-night's reading is my twenty-sixth; but as all the Philadelphia tickets for four more are sold, as well as four at Brooklyn, you must assume that I am at—say—my thirty-fifth reading. I have remitted to Coutts's in English gold £10,000 odd; and I roughly calculate that on this number Dolby will have another thousand pounds profit to pay me. These figures are of course between ourselves, at present; but are they not magnificent? The expenses, always recollect, are enormous On the other hand we never have occasion to print a bill of any sort (bill-printing and posting are great charges at home); and have just now sold off £90 worth of bill-paper, provided beforehand, as a wholly useless incumbrance."

Then came, as ever, the constant shadow that still attended him, the slave in the chariot of his triumph. "The work is very severe. There is now no chance of my being rid of this American catarrh until I embark for England. It is very distressing. It likewise happens, not seldom, that I am so dead beat when I come off that they lay me

down on a sofa after I have been washed and dressed, and I lie there, extremely faint, for a quarter of an hour. In that time I rally and come right." One week later from New York, where he had become due on the 16th for the first of his four Brooklyn readings, he wrote to his sister-in-law. "My cold sticks to me, and I can scarcely exaggerate what I undergo from sleeplessness. I rarely take any breakfast but an egg and a cup of tea—not even toast or bread and butter. My small dinner at 3, and a little quail or some such light thing when I come home at night, is my daily fare; and at the hall I have established the custom of taking an egg beaten up in sherry before going in, and another between the parts, which I think pulls me up. . . . It is snowing hard now, and I begin to move to-morrow. There is so much floating ice in the river, that we are obliged to have a pretty wide margin of time for getting over the ferry to read." The last of the readings over the ferry was on the day when this letter was written. "I finished at my church to-night. It is Mrs. Stowe's brother's, and a most wonderful place to speak in. We had it enormously full last night ('Marigold and Trial'), but it scarcely required an effort. Mr. Ward Beecher being present in his pew, I sent to invite him to come round before he left. I found him to be an unostentatious, evidently able, straightforward, and agreeable man; extremely well-informed, and with a good knowledge of art."

"When I read in Mr. Beecher's church at Brooklyn, we found the trustees had suppressed the fact that a certain upper gallery holding 150 was 'the Coloured Gallery.' On the first night not a soul could be induced to enter it; and it was not until it became known next day that I was certainly not going to read there more than four times, that we managed to fill it. One night at New York, on our second or third row, there were two well-dressed women with a tinge of colour—I should say, not even quadroons. But the holder of one ticket who found his seat to be next them, demanded of Dolby 'What he meant by fixing him next to those two Gord darmed cusses of niggers?' and insisted on being supplied with another good place. Dolby firmly replied that he was perfectly certain Mr. Dickens would not recognise such an objection

on any account, but he could have his money back if he chose. Which, after some squabbling, he had. In a comic scene in the New York Circus one night, when I was looking on, four white people sat down upon a form in a barber's shop to be shaved. A coloured man came as the fifth customer, and the four immediately ran away. This was much laughed at and applauded. In the Baltimore Penitentiary, the white prisoners dine on one side of the room, the coloured prisoners on the other; and no one has the slightest idea of mixing them. But it is indubitably the fact that exhalations not the most agreeable arise from a number of coloured people got together, and I was obliged to beat a quick retreat from their dormitory. I strongly believe that they will die out of this country fast. It seems, looking at them, so manifestly absurd to suppose it possible that they can ever hold their own against a restless, shifty, striving, stronger race."

On the fourth of February, 1868, he wrote from Washington. "You may like to have a line to let you know that it is all right here. I began last night. A charming audience, no dissatisfaction whatever at the raised prices, nothing missed or lost, cheers at the end of the 'Carol,' and rounds upon rounds of applause all through. All the foremost men and their families had taken tickets for the series of four. A small place to read in. £300 in it." His anecdote of President Lincoln was repeatedly told by Dickens after his return. "I am going to-morrow to see the President,* who has sent to me twice. I dined with Charles Sumner last Sunday, against my rule; and as I had stipulated for no party, Mr. Secretary Stanton was the only other guest, besides his own secretary. Stanton is a man with a very remarkable memory, and extraordinarily familiar with my books. . . . He and Sumner having been the first two public men at the dying President's bedside, and having remained with him until he breathed his last, we fell into a very interesting conversation after dinner, when, each of them giving his own narrative separately, the usual discrepancies about details of time were observable. Then Mr. Stanton told me a curious little story which will form the remainder of this short letter.

"On the afternoon of the day on which the President was shot, there was a cabinet council at which he presided.

* Andrew Johnson.—Ed.

Mr. Stanton, being at the time commander-in-chief of the Northern troops that were concentrated about here, arrived rather late. Indeed they were waiting for him, and on his entering the room, the President broke off in something he was saying, and remarked: 'Let us proceed to business, gentlemen.' Mr. Stanton then noticed, with great surprise, that the President sat with an air of dignity in his chair instead of lolling about it in the most ungainly attitudes, as his invariable custom was; and that instead of telling irrelevant or questionable stories, he was grave and calm, and quite a different man. Mr. Stanton, on leaving the council with the Attorney-General, said to him, 'That is the most satisfactory cabinet meeting I have attended for many a long day! What an extraordinary change in Mr. Lincoln!' The Attorney-General replied, 'We all saw it, before you came in. While we were waiting for you, he said, with his chin down on his breast, 'Gentlemen, something very extraordinary is going to happen, and that very soon.' To which the Attorney-General had observed, 'Something good, sir, I hope?' when the President answered very gravely: 'I don't know; I don't know. But it will happen, and shortly too!' As they were all impressed by his manner, the Attorney-General took him up again: 'Have you received any information, sir, not yet disclosed to us?' 'No,' answered the President: 'but I have had a dream. And I have now had the same dream three times. Once, on the night preceding the Battle of Bull Run. Once, on the night preceding' such another (naming a battle also not favourable to the North). His chin sank on his breast again, and he sat reflecting. 'Might one ask the nature of this dream, sir?' said the Attorney-General. 'Well,' replied the President, without lifting his head or changing his attitude, 'I am on a great broad rolling river—and I am in a boat—and I drift—and I drift!—but this is not business—' suddenly raising his face and looking round the table as Mr. Stanton entered, 'let us proceed to business, gentlemen.' Mr. Stanton and the Attorney-General said, as they walked on together, it would be curious to notice whether anything ensued on this; and they agreed to notice. He was shot that night."

On his birthday, the seventh of February, Dickens had his interview with President Andrew Johnson. "This

scrambling scribblement is resumed this morning, because I have just seen the President: who had sent to me very courteously asking me to make my own appointment. He is a man with a remarkable face, indicating courage, watchfullness, and certainly strength of purpose. It is a face of the Webster type, but without the 'bounce' of Webster's face. I would have picked him out anywhere as a character of mark. Figure, rather stoutish for an American; a trifle under the middle size; hands clasped in front of him; manner, suppressed, guarded, anxious. Each of us looked at the other very hard. . . . It was in his own cabinet that I saw him. As I came away, Thornton drove up in a sleigh—turned out for a state occasion—to deliver his credentials. There was to be a cabinet council at twelve. The room was very like a London club's ante-drawing room. On the walls, two engravings only: one, of his own portrait; one, of Lincoln's. . . . In the outer room was sitting a certain sunburnt General Blair, with many evidences of the war upon him. He got up to shake hands with me, and then I found that he had been out on the Prairie with me five-and-twenty years ago. . . . The papers having referred to my birthday's falling to-day, my room is filled with most exquisite flowers. They came pouring in from all sorts of people at breakfast time. The audiences here are really very fine. So ready to laugh or cry, and doing both so freely, that you would suppose them to be Manchester shillings rather than Washington half-sovereigns. Alas! alas! my cold worse than ever."

The first reading had been four days earlier, and was described to his daughter in a letter on the 4th, with a comical incident that occurred in the course of it. "The gas was very defective indeed last night, and I began with a small speech to the effect that I must trust to the brightness of their faces for the illumination of mine. This was taken greatly. In the 'Carol' a most ridiculous incident occurred. All of a sudden, I saw a dog leap out from among the seats in the centre aisle, and look very intently at me. The general attention being fixed on me. I don't think anybody saw this dog; but I felt so sure of his turning up again and barking, that I kept my eye wandering about in search of him. He was a very comic dog, and it was well for me that I was reading a comic part of the book. But when he bounced out into the

centre aisle again, in an entirely new place, and (still looking intently at me) tried the effect of a bark upon my proceedings, I was seized with such a paroxysm of laughter that it communicated itself to the audience, and we roared at one another, loud and long." Three days later the sequel came, in a letter to his sister-in-law. "I mentioned the dog on the first night here? Next night, I thought I heard (in 'Copperfield') a suddenly suppressed bark. It happened in this wise: One of our people, standing just within the door, felt his leg touched, and looking down beheld the dog, staring intently at me, and evidently just about to bark. In a transport of presence of mind and fury, he instantly caught him up in both hands, and threw him over his own head, out into the entry, where the check-takers received him like a game at ball. Last night he came again, *with another dog;* but our people were so sharply on the lookout for him that he didn't get in. He had evidently promised to pass the other dog, free."

On the 13th of March he wrote to me from Buffalo. "We go to the Falls of Niagara to-morrow for our own pleasure; and I take all the men, as a treat. We found Rochester last Tuesday in a very curious state. Perhaps you know that the Great Falls of the Genesee River (really very fine, even so near Niagara) are at that place. In the height of a sudden thaw, an immense bank of ice above the rapids refused to yield; so that the town was threatened (for the second time in four years) with submersion. Boats were ready in the streets, all the people were up all night, and none but the children slept. In the dead of the night a thundering noise was heard, the ice gave way, the swollen river came raging and roaring down the Falls, and the town was safe. Very picturesque! but 'not very good for business,' as the manager says. Especially as the hall stands in the centre of danger, and had ten feet of water in it on the last occasion of flood. But I think we had above £200 English. On the previous night at Syracuse—a most out-of-the-way and unintelligible-looking place, with apparently no people in it—we had £375 odd. Here we had, last night, and shall have to-night, whatever we can cram into the hall.

"This Buffalo has become a large and important town, with numbers of German and Irish in it. But it is very

curious to notice, as we touch the frontier, that the American female beauty dies out; and a woman's face clumsily compounded of German, Irish, Western America, and Canadian, not yet fused together, and not yet moulded, obtains instead. Our show of Beauty at night is, generally, remarkable; but we had not a dozen pretty women in the whole throng last night, and the faces were all blunt. I have just been walking about, and observing the same thing in the streets. . . . The winter has been so severe, that the hotel on the English side at Niagara (which has the best view of the Falls, and is for that reason very preferable) is not yet open. So we go, perforce, to the American: which telegraphs back to our telegram: 'All Mr. Dickens's requirements perfectly understood.' I have not yet been in more than two *very bad* inns. I have been in some, where a good deal of what is popularly called 'slopping round' has prevailed; but have been able to get on very well. 'Slopping round,' so used, means untidiness and disorder. It is a comically expressive phrase, and has many meanings. Fields was asking the price of a quarter-cask of sherry the other day. 'Wa'al Mussr Fields,' the merchant replies, 'that varies according to quality, as is but nay'tral. If yer wa'ant a sherry just to slop round with it, I can fix you some at a very low figger.'"

His letter was resumed at Rochester on the 18th. "After two most brilliant days at the Falls of Niagara, we got back here last night. To-morrow morning we turn out at 6 for a long railway journey back to Albany. But it is nearly all 'back' now, thank God! I don't know how long, though, before turning, we might have gone on at Buffalo. . . . We went everywhere at the Falls, and saw them in every aspect. There is a suspension bridge across, now, some two miles or more from the Horse Shoe; and another, half a mile nearer, is to be opened in July. They are very fine but very ticklish, hanging aloft there, in the continual vibration of the thundering water: nor is one greatly reassured by the printed notice that troops must not cross them at step, that bands of music must not play in crossing, and the like. I shall never forget the [illegible]spect in which we saw Niagara yesterday. We had [illegible]erywhere, when I thought of struggling (in an [illegible]riage) up some very difficult ground for a good

distance, and getting where we could stand above the river, and see it, as it rushes forward to its tremendous leap, coming for miles and miles. All away to the horizon on our right was a wonderful confusion of bright green and white water. As we stood watching it with our faces to the top of the Falls, our backs were towards the sun. The majestic valley below the Falls, so seen through the vast cloud of spray, was made of rainbow. The high banks, the riven rocks, the forests, the bridge, the buildings, the air, the sky, were all made of rainbow. Nothing in Turner's finest water-colour drawings, done in his greatest day, is so ethereal, so imaginative, so gorgeous in colour, as what I then beheld. I seemed to be lifted from the earth and to be looking into Heaven. What I once said to you, as I witnessed the scene five and twenty years ago, all came back at this most affecting and sublime sight. The 'muddy vesture of our clay' falls from us as we look. . . . I chartered a separate carriage for our men, so that they might see all in their own way, and at their own time.

"There is a great deal of water out between Rochester and New York, and travelling is very uncertain, as I fear we may find to-morrow. There is again some little alarm here on account of the river rising too fast. But our to-night's house is far ahead of the first. Most charming halls in these places; excellent for sight and sound. Almost invariably built as theatres, with stage, scenery, and good dressing-rooms. Audience seated to perfection (every seat always separate), excellent doorways and passages, and brilliant light. My screen and gas are set up in front of the drop-curtain, and the most delicate touches will tell anywhere. No creature but my own men ever near me."

His anticipation of the uncertainty that might beset his travel back had dismal fulfilment. It is described in a letter written on the 21st from Springfield to his valued friend, Mr. Frederic Ouvry, having much interest of its own, and making lively addition to the picture which these chapters give. The unflagging spirit that bears up under all disadvantages is again marvellously shown.

"You can hardly imagine what my life is with its present conditions—how hard the work is, and how little time I seem to have at my disposal. It is necessary to the daily

recovery of my voice that I should dine at 3 when n travelling; I begin to prepare for the evening at 6; an I get back to my hotel, pretty well knocked up, at hal past 10. Add to all this, perpetual railway travelling i one of the severest winters ever known; and you wil descry a reason or two for my being an indifferent correspondent. Last Sunday evening I left the Falls of Niagara for this and two intervening places. As there was a great thaw, and the melted snow was swelling all the rivers, the whole country for three hundred miles was flooded. On the Tuesday afternoon (I had read on the Monday) the train gave in, as under circumstances utterly hopeless, and stopped at a place called Utica; the greater part of which was under water, while the high and dry part could produce nothing particular to eat. Here, some of the wretched passengers passed the night in the train, while others stormed the hotel. I was fortunate enough to get a bedroom, and garnished it with an enormous jug of gin-punch; over which I and the manager played a double-dummy rubber. At six in the morning we were knocked up: 'to come aboard and try it.' At half-past six we were knocked up again with the tidings 'that it was of no use coming aboard or trying it.' At eight all the bells in the town were set agoing, to summon us to 'come aboard' instantly. And so we started, through the water, at four or five miles an hour; seeing nothing but drowned farms, barns adrift like Noah's arks, deserted villages, broken bridges, and all manner of ruin. I was to read at Albany that night, and all the tickets were sold. A very active superintendent of works assured me that if I could be 'got along,' he was the man to get me along: and that if I couldn't be got along, I might conclude that it couldn't possibly be fixed. He then turned on a hundred men in seven-league boots, who went ahead of the train, each armed with a long pole and pushing the blocks of ice away. Following this cavalcade, we got to land at last, and arrived in time for me to read the 'Carol' and 'Trial' triumphantly. My people (I had five of the staff with me) turned to at their work with a will, and did a day's labour in a couple of hours. If we had not come in as we did, I should have lost £350, and Albany would have gone distracted. You may conceive what the flood was, when

at the two most notable incidents of our journey:

1. We took the passengers out of two trains, who had been in the water, immovable all night and all the previous day. 2. We released a large quantity of sheep and cattle from trucks that had been in the water I don't know how long, but so long that the creatures in them had begun to eat each other, and presented a most horrible spectacle." *

Besides Springfield, he had engagements at Portland, New Bedford, and other places in Massachusetts, before the Boston farewells began; and there wanted but two days to bring him to that time, when he thus described to his daughter the labour which was to occupy them. His letter was from Portland on the 29th of March, and it will be observed that he no longer compromises or glozes over what he was and had been suffering. During his terrible travel to Albany his cough had somewhat spared him, but the old illness had broken out in his foot; and, though he persisted in ascribing it to the former supposed origin ("having been lately again wet, from walking in melted snow, which I suppose to be the occasion of its swelling in the old way"), it troubled him sorely, extended now at intervals to the right foot also, and lamed him for all the time he remained in the States. "I should have written to you by the last mail, but I really was too unwell to do it. The writing day was last Friday, when I ought to have left Boston for New Bedford (55 miles) before eleven in the morning. But I was so exhausted that I could not be got up, and had to take my chance of an evening train's producing me in time to read—which it just did. With the return of snow, nine days ago, my cough became as bad as ever. I have coughed every morning from two or three till five or six, and have been absolutely sleepless. I have had no appetite besides, and no taste.† Last night here, I took some laudanum; and

* What follows is from the close of the letter. "On my return, I have arranged with Chappell to take my leave of reading for good and all, in a hundred autumnal and winter Farewells *for ever*. I return by the Cunard steam-ship Russia. I had the second officer's cabin on deck when I came out; and I am to have the chief steward's going home. Cunard was so considerate as to remember that it will be on the sunny side of the vessel."

† Here was his account of his mode of living for his last ten weeks in America. "I cannot eat (to anything like the necessary extent) and have established this system. At 7 in the morning, in bed, a tumbler of new cream and two tablespoonfuls of rum. At 12, a

it is the only thing that has done me good, though it made me sick this morning. But the life, in this climate, is so very hard! When I did manage to get to New Bedford, I read with my utmost force and vigour. Next morning, well or ill, I must turn out at seven, to get back to Boston on my way here. I dined at Boston at three, and at five had to come on here (a hundred and thirty miles or so) for to-morrow night: there being no Sunday train. To-morrow night I read here in a very large place; and Tuesday morning at six I must again start, to get back to Boston once more. But after to-morrow night I have only the farewells, thank God! Even as it is, however, I have had to write to Dolby (who is in New York) to see my doctor there, and ask him to send me some composing medicine that I can take at night, inasmuch as without sleep I cannot get through. However sympathetic and devoted the people are about one, they CAN NOT be got to comprehend, seeing me able to do the two hours when the time comes round, that it may also involve much misery." To myself on the 30th he wrote from the same place, making like confession. No comment could deepen the sadness of the story of suffering, revealed in his own simple language. "I write in a town three parts of which were burnt down in a tremendous fire three years ago. The people lived in tents while their city was rebuilding. The charred trunks of the trees with which the streets of the old city were planted, yet stand here and there in the new thoroughfares like black spectres. The rebuilding is still in progress everywhere. Yet such is the astonishing energy of the people that the large hall in which I am to read to-night (its predecessor was burnt) would compare very favourably with the Free Trade Hall at Manchester! . . . I am nearly used up. Climate, distance, catarrh, travelling, and hard work, have begun (I may say so, now they are nearly all over) to tell heavily upon me. Sleeplessness besets me; and if I had engaged to go on into May, I think I must have broken down. It was well that I cut

sherry cobbler and a biscuit. At 3 (dinner time) a pint of champagne. At five minutes to 8, an egg beaten up with a glass of sherry. Between the parts, the strongest beef tea that can be made, drunk hot. At a quarter past 10, soup, and any little thing to drink that I can fancy. I do not eat more than half a pound of solid food in the whole four-and-twenty hours, if so much."

off the Far West and Canada when I did. There would else have been a sad complication. It is impossible to make the people about one understand, however zealous and devoted (it is impossible even to make Dolby understand until the pinch comes), that the power of coming up to the mark every night, with spirits and spirit, may coexist with the nearest approach to sinking under it. When I got back to Boston on Thursday, after a very hard three weeks, I saw that Fields was very grave about my going on to New Bedford (55 miles) next day, and then coming on here (180 miles) *next* day. But the stress is over, and so I can afford to look back upon it, and think about it, and write about it." On the 31st he closed his letter at Boston, and he was at home when I heard of him again. "The latest intelligence, my dear old fellow, is, that I have arrived here safely, and that I am certainly better. I consider my work virtually over, now. My impression is, that the political crisis will damage the farewells by about one half. I cannot yet speak by the card; but my predictions here, as to our proceedings, have thus far been invariably right. We took last night at Portland, £360 English; where a costly Italian troupe, using the same hall to-night, had not booked £14! It is the same all over the country, and the worst is not seen yet. Everything is becoming absorbed in the Presidential impeachment, helped by the next Presidential election. Connecticut is particularly excited. The night after I read at Hartford this last week, there were two political meetings in the town; meetings of two parties; and the hotel was full of speakers coming in from outlying places. So at New Haven: the moment I had finished, carpenters came in to prepare for next night's politics. So at Buffalo. So everywhere very soon."

In the same tone he wrote his last letter to his sister-in-law from Boston. "My notion of the farewells is pretty certain now to turn out right. We had £300 English here last night. To-day is a Fast Day, and to-night we shall probably take much less. Then it is likely that we shall pull up again, and strike a good reasonable average; but it is not at all probable that we shall do anything enormous. Every pulpit in Massachusetts will resound with violent politics to-day and to-night." That was on the second of April, and a postscript was added,

"Friday afternoon the 3rd. Catarrh worse than ever! and we don't know (at four o'clock) whether I can read to-night or must stop. Otherwise, all well."

Dickens's last letter from America was written to his daughter Mary from Boston on the 7th of April, 1868, the day before his sixth and last farewell night. "I not only read last Friday when I was doubtful of being able to do so, but read as I never did before, and astonished the audience quite as much as myself. You never saw or heard such a scene of excitement. Longfellow and all the Cambridge men have urged me to give in. I have been very near doing so, but feel stronger to-day. I cannot tell whether the catarrh may have done me any lasting injury in the lungs or other breathing organs, until I shall have rested and got home. I hope and believe not. Consider the weather! There have been two snow-storms since I wrote last, and to-day the town is blotted out in a ceaseless whirl of snow and wind. Dolby is as tender as a woman, and as watchful as a doctor. He never leaves me during the reading, now, but sits at the side of the platform, and keeps his eye upon me all the time. Ditto George the gasman, steadiest and most reliable man I ever employed. I have 'Dombey' to do to-night, and must go through it carefully; so here ends my report. The personal affection of the people in this place is charming to the last. Did I tell you that the New York Press are going to give me a public dinner on Saturday the 18th?"

In New York, where there were five farewell nights, three thousand two hundred and ninety-eight dollars were the receipts of the last, on the 20th of April; those of the last at Boston, on the 8th, having been three thousand four hundred and fifty-six dollars. But, on earlier nights in the same cities respectively, these sums also had been reached; and, indeed, making allowance for an exceptional night here and there, the receipts varied so wonderfully little, that a mention of the highest average returns from other places will give no exaggerated impression of the ordinary receipts throughout. Excluding fractions of dollars, the lowest were New Bedford ($1640), Rochester ($1906), Springfield ($1970), and Providence ($2140). Albany and Worcester averaged something less than $2400; while Hartford, Buffalo, Baltimore, Syracuse, New Haven, and Portland rose to $2600. Washington's last night was

1870.

From a photograph taken in 1868.

$2610, no night there having less than $2500. Philadelphia exceeded Washington by $300, and Brooklyn went ahead of Philadelphia by $200. The amount taken at the four Brooklyn readings was 11,128 dollars.

The New York public dinner was given at Delmonico's, the hosts were more than two hundred, and the chair was taken by Mr. Horace Greeley. Dickens attended with great difficulty,* and spoke in pain. But he used the occasion to bear his testimony to the changes of twenty-five years; the rise of vast new cities; growth in the graces and amenities of life; much improvement in the press, essential to every other advance; and changes in himself leading to opinions more deliberately formed.

He had to leave the room before the proceedings were over. On the following Monday he read to his last American audience, telling them at the close that he hoped often to recall them, equally by his winter fire and in the green summer weather, and never as a mere public audience but as a host of personal friends. He sailed two days later in the Russia, and reached England in the first week of May, 1868.

Favourable weather helped Dickens pleasantly home. He had profited greatly by the sea voyage, perhaps greatly more by its repose; and on the 25th of May he described himself to his Boston friends as brown beyond belief, and causing the greatest disappointment in all quarters by looking so well. "My doctor was quite broken down in spirits on seeing me for the first time last Saturday. *Good lord! seven years younger!* said the doctor, recoiling." That he gave all the credit to "those fine days at sea," and none to the rest from such labours as he had passed through, the close of the letter too sadly showed. "We are already settling—think of this! the details of my farewell course of readings."

* Here is the newspaper account: "At about five o'clock on Saturday the hosts began to assemble, but at 5.30 the news was received that the expected guest had succumbed to a painful affection of the foot. In a short time, however, another bulletin announced Mr. Dickens's intention to attend the dinner at all hazards. At a little after six, having been assisted up the stairs, he was joined by Mr. Greeley, and the hosts forming in two lines silently permitted the distinguished gentlemen to pass through. Mr. Dickens limped perceptibly; his right foot was swathed, and he leaned heavily on the arm of Mr. Greeley. He evidently suffered great pain."

XXV.

Under every difficulty, and in every emergency, his was the encouraging influence, the bright and ready help. In illness, whether of the children or any of the servants, he was better than a doctor. He was so full of resource, for which every one eagerly turned to him, that his mere presence in the sick-room was a healing influence, as if nothing could fail if he were only there. So that at last, when, all through the awful night which preceded his departure, he lay senseless in the room where he had fallen, the stricken and bewildered ones who tended him found it impossible to believe that what they saw before them alone was left, or to shut out wholly the strange wild hope that he might again be suddenly among them *like* himself, and revive what they could not connect, even then, with death's despairing helplessness.

It was not a feeling confined to the relatives whom he had thus taught to have such exclusive dependence on him. Among the consolations addressed to those mourners came words from one whom in life he had most honoured, and who also found it difficult to connect him with death, or to think that he should never see that blithe face any more. "It is almost thirty years," Mr. Carlyle wrote, "since my acquaintance with him began; and on my side, I may say, every new meeting ripened it into more and more clear discernment of his rare and great worth as a brother man: a most cordial, sincere, clear-sighted, quietly decisive, just and loving man: till at length he had grown to such a recognition with me as I have rarely had for any man of my time. This I can tell you three, for it is true and will be welcome to you: to others less concerned I had as soon *not* speak on such a subject." "I am profoundly sorry for *you*," Mr. Carlyle at the same time wrote to me; "and indeed for myself and for us all. It is an event world-wide; a *unique* of talents suddenly extinct; and has 'eclipsed,' we too may say, 'the harmless gaiety of nations.' No death since 1866 * has fallen on me with such a stroke. No literary man's hitherto ever did. The good, the gentle, high-gifted, ever-friendly, noble Dickens—every inch of him an Honest Man."

* In that year Carlyle's wife died.—Ed.

The saying in his letter to his youngest son that he was to do to others what he would that they should do to him, without being discouraged if they did not do it; and his saying to the Birmingham people that they were to attend to self-improvement not because it led to fortune, but because it was right; express a principle that at all times guided himself. Capable of strong attachments, he was not what is called an effusive man; but he had no half-heartedness in any of his likings. The one thing entirely hateful to him, was indifference. "I give my heart to very few people; but I would sooner love the most implacable man in the world than a careless one, who, if my place were empty to-morrow, would rub on and never miss me." There was nothing he more repeatedly told his children than that they were not to let indifference in others appear to justify it in themselves. "All kind things," he wrote, "must be done on their own account, and for their own sake, and without the least reference to our gratitude." Again he laid it down, while he was making some exertion for the sake of a dead friend that did not seem likely to win proper appreciation from those it was to serve. "As to gratitude from the family—as I have often remarked to you, one does a generous thing because it is right and pleasant, and not for any response it is to awaken in others." The rule in another form frequently appears in his letters; and it was enforced in many ways upon all who were dear to him. It is worth while to add his comment on a regret of a member of his family at an act of self-devotion supposed to have been thrown away: "Nothing of what is nobly done can ever be lost." It is also to be noted as in the same spirit, that it was not the loud but the silent heroisms he most admired.

What more could I say that was not better said from the pulpit of the Abbey where he rests? "He whom we mourn [said Professor Jowett] was the friend of mankind, a philanthropist in the true sense; the friend of youth, the friend of the poor, the enemy of every form of meanness and oppression. I am not going to attempt to draw a portrait of him. Men of genius are different from what we suppose them to be. They have greater pleasures and greater pains, greater affections and greater temptations, than the generality of mankind, and they can never

ing. Possibly we might not have been able to subscribe to the same creed in relation to God, but I think we should have subscribed to the same creed in relation to man. He who has taught us our duty to our fellow-men better than we knew it before, who knew so well to weep with them that wept, and to rejoice with them that rejoiced, who has shown forth in all his knowledge of the dark corners of the earth how much sunshine may rest upon the lowliest lot, who had such evident sympathy with suffering, and such a natural instinct of purity that there is scarcely a page of the thousands he has written which might not be put into the hands of a little child, must be regarded by those who recognise the diversity of the gifts of the spirit as a teacher sent from God. He would have been welcomed as a fellow-labourer in the common interests of humanity by Him who aked the question: 'If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?'"

"The loss of no single man during the present generation, if we except Abraham Lincoln alone," said Mr. Horace Greeley, describing the profound and universal grief of America at his death, "has carried mourning into so many families, and been so unaffectedly lamented through all the ranks of society." "The terrible news from England," wrote Longfellow to me (Cambridge, Mass., 12th of June, 1870), "fills us all with inexpressible sadness. Dickens was so full of life that it did not seem possible he could die, and yet he has gone before us, and we are sorrowing for him. . . . I never knew an author's death cause such general mourning. It is no exaggeration to say that this whole country is stricken with grief. . . ." Nor was evidence then wanting, that far beyond the limits of society on that vast continent the English writer's influence had penetrated. Of this, very touching illustration was given on a former page; and proof even more striking has since been afforded to me, that not merely in wild or rude communities, but in life the most savage and solitary, his genius had helped to while time away.

"Like all Americans who read," writes an American gentleman, "and that takes in nearly all our people, I am an admirer and student of Dickens. . . . Twelve or thirteen years ago I crossed the Sierra Nevada mountains as a Government surveyor under a famous frontiersman

and civil engineer—Colonel Lander. We were too early by a month, and became snow-bound just on the very summit. Under these circumstances it was necessary to abandon the waggons for a time, and drive the stock (mules) down the mountains to the valleys where there was pasturage and running water. This was a long and difficult task, occupying several days. On the second day, in a spot where we expected to find nothing more human than a grizzly bear or an elk, we found a little hut, built of pine boughs and a few rough boards clumsily hewn out of small trees with an axe. The hut was covered with snow many feet deep, excepting only the hole in the roof which served for a chimney, and a small pit-like place in front to permit egress. The occupant came forth to hail us and solicit whiskey and tobacco. He was dressed in a suit made entirely of flour-sacks, and was curiously labelled on various parts of his person *Best Family Flour. Extra.* His head was covered by a wolf's skin drawn from the brute's head—with the ears standing erect in a fierce alert manner. He was a most extraordinary object, and told us he had not seen a human being in four months. He lived on bear and elk meat and flour, laid in during his short summer. Emigrants in the season paid him a kind of ferry-toll. I asked him how he passed his time, and he went to a barrel and produced 'Nicholas Nickleby' and 'Pickwick.' I found he knew them almost by heart. He did not know, or seem to care, about the author; but he gloried in Sam Weller, despised Squeers, and would probably have taken the latter's scalp with great skill and cheerfulness. For Mr. Winkle he had no feeling but contempt, and in fact regarded a fowling-piece as only a toy for a squaw. He had no Bible; and perhaps if he practised in his rude savage way all Dickens taught, he might less have felt the want even of that companion."

MY FATHER AS I RECALL HIM.

BY

MAMIE DICKENS.

CHAPTER I.

If, in these pages, written in remembrance of my father, I should tell you, my dear friends, nothing new of him, I can, at least, promise you that what I shall tell will be told faithfully, if simply, and perhaps there may be some things not familiar to you.

A great many writers have taken it upon themselves to write lives of my father, to tell anecdotes of him, and to print all manner of things about him. Of all these published books I have read but one, the only genuine "Life" thus far written of him, the one sanctioned by my father himself, namely: "The Life of Charles Dickens," by John Forster.

But . . . in what I write about my father I shall depend chiefly upon my own memory of him, for I wish no other or dearer remembrance. My love for my father has never been touched or approached by any other love. I hold him in my heart of hearts as a man apart from all other men, as one apart from all other beings.

Of my father's childhood it is but natural that I should know very little more than the knowledge possessed by the great public. But I never remember hearing him allude at any time, or under any circumstances, to those unhappy days in his life except in the one instance of his childish love and admiration for Gadshill, which was

destined to become so closely associated with his name and works.

He had a very strong and faithful attachment for places: Chatham, I think, being his first love in this respect. For it was here, when a child, and a very sickly child, poor little fellow, that he found in an old spare room a store of books, among which were "Roderick Random," "Peregrine Pickle," "Humphrey Clinker," "Tom Jones," "The Vicar of Wakefield," "Don Quixote," "Gil Blas," "Robinson Crusoe," "The Arabian Nights," and other volumes. "They were," as Mr. Forster wrote, "a host of friends when he had no single friend." And it was while living at Chatham that he first saw Gadshill.

As a "very queer small boy" he used to walk up to the house—it stood on the summit of a high hill—on holidays, or when his heart ached for a "great treat." He would stand and look at it, for as a little fellow he had a wonderful liking and admiration for the house, and it was, to him, like no other house he had ever seen. He would walk up and down before it with his father, gazing at it with delight, and the latter would tell him that perhaps if he worked hard, was industrious, and grew up to be a good man, he might some day come to live in that very house. His love for this place went through his whole life, and was with him until his death. He takes Mr. Pickwick and his friends from Rochester to Cobham by the beautiful back road, and I remember one day when we were driving that way he showed me the exact spot where Mr. Pickwick called out: "Whoa, I have dropped my whip!" After his marriage he took his wife for the honeymoon to a village called Chalk, between Gravesend and Rochester.

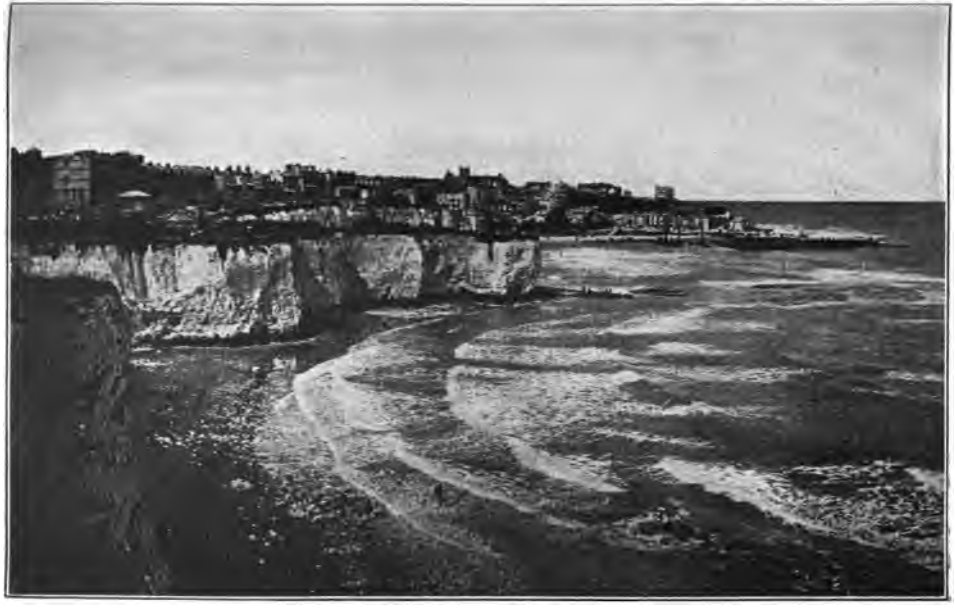
Many years after, when he was living with his family in a villa near Lausanne, he wrote to a friend: "The green woods and green shades about here are more like Cobham, in Kent, than anything we dream of at the foot of the Alpine passes." And again, in still later years, one of his favourite walks from Gadshill was to a village called Shorne, where there was a quaint old church and graveyard. He often said that he would like to be buried there, the peace and quiet of the homely little place having a tender fascination for him. So we see that his heart was always in Kent.

But let this single reference to his earlier years suffice, so that I may write of him during those years when I remember him among us and around us in our home.

From his earliest childhood, throughout his earliest married life to the day of his death, his nature was home-loving. He was a "home man" in every respect. When he became celebrated at a very early age, as we know, all his joys and sorrows were taken home: and he found there sympathy and the companionship of his "own familiar friends." In his letters to these latter, in his letters to my mother, to my aunt, and, later on, to us his children, he never forgot anything that he knew would be of interest about his work, his successes, his hopes or fears. And there was a sweet simplicity in his belief that such news would most certainly be acceptable to all, that is wonderfully touching and childlike coming from a man of genius.

His care and thoughtfulness about home matters, nothing being deemed too small or trivial to claim his attention and consideration, were really marvellous, when we remember his active, eager, restless, working brain. No man was so inclined naturally to derive his happiness from home affairs. He was full of the kind of interest in a house which is commonly confined to women, and his care of and for us as wee children did most certainly "pass the love of women!" His was a tender and most affectionate nature.

For many consecutive summers we used to be taken to Broadstairs. This little place became a great favourite with my father. He was always very happy there, and delighted in wandering about the garden of his house, generally accompanied by one or other of his children. In later years, at Boulogne, he would often have his youngest boy, "The Noble Plorn," trotting by his side. These two were constant companions in those days, and after these walks my father would always have some funny anecdote to tell us. And when years later the time came for the boy of his heart to go out into the world, my father, after seeing him off, wrote: "Poor Plorn has gone to Australia. It was a hard parting at the last. He seemed to become once more my youngest and favourite little child as the day drew near, and I did not think I could have been so shaken. These are hard, hard things, but they might have



VIEW OF THE CLIFFS, BROADSTAIRS, KENT.
Broadstairs was Dickens's usual summer or autumn resort in 1837-51.

to be done without means or influence, and then they would be far harder. God bless him!"

When my father was arranging and rehearsing his readings from "Dombey," the death of little Paul caused him such real anguish, the reading being so difficult to him, that he told us he could only master his intense emotion by keeping the picture of Plorn, well, strong and hearty, steadily before his eyes. We can see by the different child characters in his books what a wonderful knowledge he had of children, and what a wonderful and truly womanly sympathy he had with them in all their childish joys and griefs. I can remember with us, his own children, how kind, considerate and patient he always was. But we were never afraid to go to him in any trouble, and never had a snub from him or a cross word under any circumstances. He was always glad to give us "treats," as he called them, and used to conceive all manner of those "treats" for us, and if any favour had to be asked we were always sure of a favourable answer. On these occasions my sister "Katie" was generally our messenger, we others waiting outside the study door to hear the verdict. She and I used to have delightful treats in those summer evenings, driving up to Hampstead in the open carriage with him, our mother and "Auntie," * and getting out for a long walk through the lovely country lanes, picking wild roses and other flowers, or walking hand in hand with him listening to some story.

There never existed, I think, in all the world, a more thoroughly tidy or methodical creature than was my father. He was tidy in every way—in his mind, in his handsome and graceful person, in his work, in keeping his writing table drawers, in his large correspondence, in fact in his whole life.

I remember that my sister and I occupied a little garret room in Devonshire Terrace, at the very top of the house. He had taken the greatest pains and care to make the room as pretty and comfortable for his two little daughters

* When I write about my aunt, or "Auntie," as no doubt I may often have occasion to do, it is of the aunt *par excellence*, Georgina Hogarth. She has been to me ever since I can remember anything, and to all of us, the truest, best and dearest friend, companion and counsellor. To quote my father's own words: "The best and truest friend man ever had."

as it could be made. He was often dragged up the steep staircase to this room to see some new print or some new ornament which we children had put up, and he always gave us words of praise and approval.

He encouraged us in every possible way to make ourselves useful, and to adorn and beautify our rooms with our own hands, and to be ever tidy and neat. I remember that the adornment of this garret was decidedly primitive, the unframed prints being fastened to the wall by ordinary black or white pins, whichever we could get. But, never mind, if they were put up neatly and tidily they were always "excellent," or "quite slap-up," as he used to say. Even in those early days, he made a point of visiting every room in the house once each morning, and if a chair was out of its place, or a blind not quite straight, or a crumb left on the floor, woe betide the offender.

And then his punctuality! It was almost frightful to an unpunctual mind! This again was another phase of his extreme tidiness; it was also the outcome of his excessive thoughtfulness and consideration for others. His sympathy, also, with all pain and suffering, made him quite invaluable in a sick room. Quick, active, sensible, bright and cheery, and sympathetic to a degree, he would seize the "case" at once, know exactly what to do, and do it. In all our childish ailments his visits were eagerly looked forward to; and our little hearts would beat a shade faster, and our aches and pains become more bearable, when the sound of his quick footstep was heard, and the encouraging accents of his voice greeted the invalid. I can remember now, as if it were yesterday, how the touch of his hand—he had a most sympathetic touch—was almost too much sometimes, the help and hope in it making my heart full to overflowing. He believed firmly in the power of mesmerism, as a remedy in some forms of illness, and was himself a mesmerist of no mean order; I know of many cases, my own among the number, in which he used his power in this way with perfect success.

And however busy he might be, and even in his hours of relaxation, he was still, if you can understand me, always busy; he would give up any amount of time, and spare himself no fatigue, if he could in any way alleviate sickness and pain.

In very many of my father's books there are frequent

references to delicious meals, wonderful dinners, and more marvellous dishes, steaming bowls of punch, etc., which have led many to believe that he was a man very fond of the table. And yet I think no more abstemious man ever lived.

In the Gadshill days, when the house was full of visitors, he had a peculiar notion of always having the menu for the day's dinner placed on the sideboard at luncheon time. And then he would discuss every item in his fanciful, humorous way with his guests, much to this effect: "Cock-a-leekie? Good, decidedly good; fried soles with shrimp sauce? Good again; croquettes of chicken? Weak, very weak; decided want of imagination here," and so on, and he would apparently be so taken up with the merits or demerits of a menu that one might imagine he lived for nothing but the coming dinner. He had a small but healthy appetite, but was remarkably abstemious both in eating and drinking.

He was delightful as a host, caring individually for each guest, and bringing the special qualities of each into full notice and prominence, putting the very shyest at his or her ease, making the best of the most humdrum, and never thrusting himself forward.

But when he was most delightful, was alone with us at home and sitting over dessert, and when my sister was with us especially—I am talking now of our grown-up days—for she had great power in "drawing him out." At such times, although he might sit down to dinner in a grave or abstracted mood, he would, invariably, soon throw aside his silence and end by delighting us all with his genial talk and his quaint fancies about people and things. He was always, as I have said, much interested in mesmerism, and the curious influence exercised by one personality over another. One illustration I remember his using was, that meeting some one in the busy London streets, he was on the point of turning back to accost the supposed friend, when finding out his mistake in time he walked on again until he actually met the real friend, whose shadow, as it were, but a moment ago had come across his path.

And then the forgetting of a word or a name. "Now into what pigeonhole of my brain did that go, and why do I suddenly remember it now?" And as these thoughts

passed through his mind and were spoken dreamily, so they also appeared in his face. Another instant, perhaps, and his eyes would be full of fun and laughter.

At the beginning of his literary career he suffered a great sorrow in the death—a very sudden death—of my mother's sister, Mary Hogarth. She was of a most charming and lovable disposition, as well as being personally very beautiful. Soon after my parents married, Aunt Mary was constantly with them. As her nature developed she became my father's ideal of what a young girl should be. And his own words show how this great affection and the influence of the girl's loved memory were with him to the end of his life. The shock of her sudden death so affected and prostrated him that the publication of "Pickwick" was interrupted for two months.

"That beautiful passage [he wrote to Mr. Forster] you were so kind and considerate as to send to me has given me the only feeling akin to pleasure (sorrowful pleasure it is) that I have yet had connected with the loss of my dear young friend and companion, for whom my love and attachment will never diminish, and by whose side, if it please God to leave me in possession of sense to signify my wishes, my bones, whenever or wherever I die, will one day be laid."

She was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, and her grave bears the following inscription, written by my father:

"Young, beautiful, and good, God in His mercy numbered her among His angels at the early age of seventeen."

A year after her death, in writing to my mother from Yorkshire, he says: "Is it not extraordinary that the same dreams which have constantly visited me since poor Mary died follow me everywhere? After all the change of scene and fatigue I have dreamt of her ever since I left home, and no doubt shall until I return. I would fain believe, sometimes, that her spirit may have some influence over them, but their perpetual repetition is extraordinary."

In the course of years there came changes in our home, inevitable changes. But no change could ever alter my father's home-loving nature. As he wrote to Mr. Forster, as a young man, so it was with him to the time of his death: "We shall soon meet, please God, and be happier than ever we were in all our lives. Oh! home—home—home!!!"

CHAPTER II.

CHRISTMAS was always a time which in our home was looked forward to with eagerness and delight, and to my father it was a time dearer than any other part of the year, I think. He loved Christmas for its deep significance as well as for its joys, and this he demonstrates in every allusion in his writings to the great festival, a day which he considered should be fragrant with the love that we should bear one to another, and with the love and reverence of his Saviour and Master. Even in his most merry conceits of Christmas, there are always subtle and tender touches which will bring tears to the eyes, and make even the thoughtless have some special veneration for this most blessed anniversary.

In our childish days my father used to take us, every twenty-fourth day of December, to a toy-shop in Holborn, where we were allowed to select our Christmas presents, and also any that we wished to give to our little companions. Although I believe we were often an hour or more in the shop before our several tastes were satisfied, he never showed the least impatience, was always interested, and as desirous as we that we should choose exactly what we liked best. As we grew older, present-giving was confined to our several birthdays, and this annual visit to the Holborn toy-shop ceased.

When we were only babies my father determined that we should be taught to dance, so as early as the Genoa days we were given our first lessons. "Our oldest boy and his sisters are to be waited upon next week by a professor of the noble art of dancing," he wrote to a friend at this time. And again, in writing to my mother, he says: "I hope the dancing-lessons will be a success. Don't fail to let me know."

Our progress in the graceful art delighted him, and his admiration of our success was evident when we exhibited to him, as we were perfected in them, all the steps, exercises and dances which formed our lessons. He always encouraged us in our dancing, and praised our grace and aptness, although criticised quite severely in some places

for allowing his children to expend so much time and energy upon the training of their feet.

When "the boys" came home for the holidays there were constant rehearsals for the Christmas and New Year's parties; and more especially for the dance on Twelfth Night, the anniversary of my brother Charlie's birthday. Just before one of these celebrations my father insisted that my sister Katie and I should teach the polka step to Mr. Leech and himself. My father was as much in earnest about learning to take that wonderful step correctly, as though there were nothing of greater importance in the world. Often he would practise gravely in a corner, without either partner or music, and I remember one cold winter's night his awakening with the fear that he had forgotten the step so strong upon him that, jumping out of bed, by the scant illumination of the old-fashioned rushlight, and to his own whistling, he diligently rehearsed its "one, two, three, one, two, three" until he was once more secure in his knowledge.

No one can imagine our excitement and nervousness when the evening came on which we were to dance with our pupils. Katie, who was a very little girl, was to have Mr. Leech, who was over six feet tall, for her partner, while my father was to be mine. My heart beat so fast that I could scarcely breathe, I was so fearful for the success of our exhibition. But my fears were groundless, and we were greeted at the finish of our dance with hearty applause, which was more than compensation for the work which had been expended upon its learning.

My father was certainly not what in the ordinary acceptation of the term would be called "a good dancer." I doubt whether he had ever received any instruction in "the noble art" other than that which my sister and I gave him. In later years I remember trying to teach him the schottische, a dance which he particularly admired and desired to learn. But although he was so fond of dancing, except at family gatherings in his own or his most intimate friends' homes I never remember seeing him join in it himself, and I doubt if, even as a young man, he ever went to balls. Graceful in motion, his dancing, such as it was, was natural to him. Dance-music was delightful to his cheery, genial spirit; the time and steps of a dance suited his tidy nature, if I may so speak.

The action and the exercise seemed to be a part of his abundant vitality.

While I am writing of my father's fondness for dancing, a characteristic anecdote of him occurs to me. While he was courting my mother, he went one summer evening to call upon her. The Hogarths were living a little way out of London, in a residence which had a drawing-room opening with French windows onto a lawn. In this room my mother and her family were seated quietly after dinner on this particular evening, when suddenly a young sailor jumped through one of the open windows into the apartment, whistled and danced a hornpipe, and before they could recover from their amazement jumped out again. A few minutes later my father walked in at the door as sedately as though quite innocent of the prank, and shook hands with every one; but the sight of their amazed faces proving too much for his attempted sobriety, his hearty laugh was the signal for the rest of the party to join in his merriment. But judging from his slight ability in later years, I fancy that he must have taken many lessons to secure his perfection in that hornpipe.

His dancing was at its best, I think, in the "Sir Roger de Coverley"—and in what are known as country-dances. In the former, while the end couples are dancing, and the side couples are supposed to be still, my father would insist upon the sides keeping up a kind of jig-step, and clapping his hands to add to the fun, and dancing at the backs of those whose enthusiasm he thought needed rousing, was himself never still for a moment until the dance was over. He was very fond of a country-dance which he learned at the house of some dear friends at Rockingham Castle, which began with quite a stately minuet to the tune of "God save the Queen," and then dashed suddenly into "Down the Middle and up Again." His enthusiasm in this dance, I remember, was so great that, one evening after some of our Tavistock House theatricals when I was thoroughly worn out with fatigue, being selected by him as his partner, I caught the infection of his merriment, and my weariness vanished. As he himself says, in describing dear old Fezziwig's Christmas party, we were "people who would dance and had no notion of walking." His enjoyment of all our frolics was equally keen, and he writes to an American friend, apropos

of one of our Christmas merrymakings: "Forster is out again; and if he don't go in again after the manner in which we have been keeping Christmas, he must be very strong indeed. Such dinings, such conjurings, such blindman's buffings, such theatre goings, such kissings out of old years and kissings in of new ones never took place in these parts before. To keep the 'Chuzzlewit' going, and to do this little book, the 'Carol,' in the odd times between two parts of it, was, as you may suppose, pretty tight work. But when it was done I broke out like a madman, and if you could have seen me at a children's party at Macready's the other night, going down a country-dance with Mrs. M., you would have thought I was a country gentleman of independent property, residing on a tip-top farm, with the wind blowing straight in my face every day."

At our holiday frolics he used sometimes to conjure for us, the equally "noble art" of the prestidigitateur being among his accomplishments. He writes of this, which he included in the list of our Twelfth Night amusements, to another American friend: "The actuary of the national debt couldn't calculate the number of children who are coming here on Twelfth Night, in honour of Charlie's birthday, for which occasion I have provided a magic lantern and divers other tremendous engines of that nature. But the best of it is that Forster and I have purchased between us the entire stock-in-trade of a conjurer, the practice and display whereof is entrusted to me. And if you could see me conjuring the company's watches into impossible tea-caddies and causing pieces of money to fly, and burning pocket handkerchiefs without burning 'em, and practising in my own room without anybody to admire, you would never forget it as long as you live."

One of these conjuring tricks comprised the disappearance and reappearance of a tiny doll, which would announce most unexpected pieces of news and messages to the different children in the audience; this doll was a particular favourite, and its arrival eagerly awaited and welcomed.

That he loved to emphasise Christmas in every possible way, the following extract from a note which he sent me in December, 1868, will evidence. After speaking of a reading which he was to give on Christmas Eve, he says:

"It occurs to me that my table at St. James's Hall might be appropriately ornamented with a little holly next Tuesday. If the two front legs were entwined with it, for instance, and a border of it ran round the top of the fringe in front, with a little sprig by way of a bouquet at each corner, it would present a seasonable appearance. If you think of this and will have the materials ready in a little basket, I will call for you at the office and take you up to the hall where the table will be ready for you."

But I think that our Christmas and New Year's tides at Gadshill were the happiest of all. Our house was always filled with guests, while a cottage in the village was reserved for the use of the bachelor members of our holiday party. My father himself always deserted work for the week, and that was almost our greatest treat. He was the fun and life of those gatherings, the true Christmas spirit of sweetness and hospitality filling his large and generous heart. Long walks with him were daily treats to be remembered. Games passed our evenings merrily. "Proverbs," a game of memory, was very popular, and it was one in which either my aunt or myself was apt to prove winner. Father's annoyance at our failure sometimes was very amusing, but quite genuine. "Dumb Crambo" was another favourite, and one in which my father's great imitative ability showed finely. I remember one evening his dumb showing of the word "frog" was so extremely laughable that the memory of it convulsed Marcus Stone, the clever artist, when he tried some time later to imitate it.

One very severe Christmas, when the snow was so deep as to make outdoor amusement or entertainment for our guests impossible, my father suggested that he and the inhabitants of the "bachelors' cottage" should pass the time in unpacking the French chalet, which had been sent to him by Mr. Fechter, and which reached Higham Station in a large number of packing cases. Unpacking these and fitting the pieces together gave them interesting employment, and some topics of conversation for our luncheon party.

Our Christmas Day dinners at Gadshill were particularly bright and cheery, some of our nearest neighbours joining our home party. The Christmas plum pudding had its own special dish of coloured "repoussé" china,

ornamented with holly. The pudding was placed on this with a sprig of real holly in the centre, lighted, and in this state placed in front of my father, its arrival being always the signal for applause. A prettily decorated table was his special pleasure, and from my earliest girlhood the care of this devolved upon me. When I had everything in readiness, he would come with me to inspect the result of my labours, before dressing for dinner, and no word except of praise ever came to my ears.

He was a wonderfully neat and rapid carver, and I am happy to say taught me some of his skill in this. I used to help him in our home parties at Gadshill by carving at a side table, returning to my seat opposite him as soon as my duty was ended. On Christmas Day we all had our glasses filled, and then my father, raising his, would say: "Here's to us all. God bless us!" a toast which was rapidly and willingly drunk. His conversation, as may be imagined, was often extremely humorous, and I have seen the servants, who were waiting at table, convulsed often with laughter at his droll remarks and stories. Now, as I recall these gatherings, my sight grows blurred with the tears that rise to my eyes. But I love to remember them, and to see, if only in memory, my father at his own table, surrounded by his own family and friends—a beautiful Christmas spirit.

"It is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas, when its Mighty Founder was a child Himself," was his own advice, and advice which he followed both in letter and spirit.

One morning—it was the last day of the year, I remember—while we were at breakfast at Gadshill, my father suggested that we should celebrate the evening by a charade to be acted in pantomime. The suggestion was received with acclamation, and amid shouts and laughing we were then and there, guests and members of the family, allotted our respective parts. My father went about collecting "stage properties," rehearsals were "called" at least four times during the morning, and in all our excitement no thought was given to that necessary part of a charade, the audience, whose business it is to guess the pantomime. At luncheon some one asked suddenly: "But what about an audience?" "Why, bless my soul," said my father, "I'd forgotten all about that." Invitations

were quickly dispatched to our neighbours, and additional preparations made for supper. In due time the audience came, and the charade was acted so successfully that the evening stands out in my memory as one of the merriest and happiest of the many merry and happy evenings in our dear old home. My father was so extremely funny in his part that the rest of us found it almost impossible to maintain sufficient control over ourselves to enable the charade to proceed as it was planned to do. It wound up with a country-dance, which had been invented that morning and practised quite a dozen times through the day, and which was concluded at just a few moments before midnight. Then leading us all, characters and audience, out into the wide hall, and throwing wide open the door, my father, watch in hand, stood waiting to hear the bells ring in the New Year. All was hush and silence after the laughter and merriment! Suddenly the peal of bells sounded, and turning he said: "A happy New Year to us all! God bless us." Kisses, good wishes and shaking of hands brought us again back to the fun and gaiety of a few moments earlier. Supper was served, the hot mulled wine drunk in toasts, and the maddest and wildest of "Sir Roger de Coverleys" ended our evening and began our New Year.

One New Year's Day my father organised some field sports in a meadow which was at the back of our house. "Foot-races for the villagers come off in my field to-morrow," he wrote to a friend, "and we have been hard at work all day, building a course, making countless flags, and I don't know what else. Layard [the late Sir Austen Henry Layard] is chief commissioner of the domestic police. The country police predict an immense crowd."

There were between two and three thousand people present at these sports, and by a kind of magical influence my father seemed to rule every creature present to do his or her best to maintain order. The likelihood of things going wrong was anticipated, and despite the general prejudice of the neighbours against the undertaking, my father's belief and trust in his guests was not disappointed. But you shall have his own account of his success. "We had made a very pretty course," he wrote, "and taken great pains. Encouraged by the cricket matches' experience, I allowed the landlord of the Falstaff to have a

drinking booth on the ground. Not to seem to dictate or distrust, I gave all the prizes in money. The great mass of the crowd were labouring men of all kinds, soldiers, sailors and navvies. They did not, between half-past ten, when we began, and sunset, displace a rope or a stake; and they left every barrier and flag as neat as they found it. There was not a dispute, and there was no drunkenness whatever. I made them a little speech from the lawn at the end of the games, saying that, please God, we would do it again next year. They cheered most lustily and dispersed. The road between this and Chatham was like a fair all day; and surely it is a fine thing to get such perfect behaviour out of a reckless seaport town." He was the last to realise, I am sure, that it was his own sympathetic nature which gave him the love and honour of all classes, and that helped to make the day's sports such a great success!

My father was again in his element at the Twelfth Night parties to which I have before alluded. For many consecutive years, Miss Coutts, now the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, was in the habit of sending my brother, on this his birthday anniversary, the most gorgeous of Twelfth-cakes, with an accompanying box of bonbons and Twelfth Night characters. The cake was cut, and the favours and bonbons distributed at the birthday supper, and it was then that my father's kindly, genial nature overflowed in merriment. He would have something droll to say to every one, and under his attentions the shyest child would brighten and become merry. No one was overlooked or forgotten by him; like the young Cratchits, he was "ubiquitous." Supper was followed by songs and recitations from the various members of the company, my father acting always as master of ceremonies, and calling upon first one child, then another for his or her contribution to the festivity. I can see now the anxious faces turned towards the beaming, laughing eyes of their host. How attentively he would listen, with his head thrown slightly back, and a little to one side, a happy smile on his lips. O, those merry, happy times, never to be forgotten by any of his own children, or by any of their guests. Those merry, happy times!

And in writing thus of these dear old holidays, when we were all so happy in our home, and when my father

was with us, let me add this little postscript, and greet you on this Christmas of 1896, with my father's own words: "Reflect upon your present blessings—of which every man has many—not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some. Fill your glass again with a merry face and contented heart. Our life on it, but your Christmas shall be merry and your New Year a happy one.

"So may the New Year be a happy one to you, happy to many more whose happiness depends on you! So may each year be happier than the last, and not the meanest of our brethren or sisterhood debarred their rightful share in what our great Creator formed them to enjoy."

CHAPTER III.

When at work my father was almost always alone, so that, with rare exceptions, save as we could see the effect of the adventures of his characters upon him in his daily moods, we knew but little of his manner of work. Absolute quiet under these circumstances was essential, the slightest sound making an interruption fatal to the success of his labours, although, oddly enough, in his leisure hours the bustle and noise of a great city seemed necessary to him. He writes, after an enforced idleness of two years, spent in a quiet place: "The difficulty of going at what I call a rapid pace is prodigious; indeed, it is almost an impossibility. I suppose this is partly the effect of two years' ease, and partly the absence of streets, and numbers of figures. I cannot express how much I want these. It seems as if they supplied something to my brain which, when busy, it cannot bear to lose. For a week or fortnight I can write prodigiously in a retired place, a day in London setting and starting me up again. But the toil and labour of writing day after day without that magic lantern is immense!"

As I have said, he was usually alone when at work, though there were, of course, some occasional exceptions, and I myself constituted such an exception. During our life at Tavistock House, I had a long and serious illness, with an almost equally long convalescence. During the

latter, my father suggested that I should be carried every day into his study to remain with him, and, although I was fearful of disturbing him, he assured me that he desired to have me with him. On one of these mornings, I was lying on the sofa endeavouring to keep perfectly quiet, while my father wrote busily and rapidly at his desk, when he suddenly jumped from his chair and rushed to a mirror which hung near, and in which I could see the reflection of some extraordinary facial contortions which he was making. He returned rapidly to his desk, wrote furiously for a few moments, and then went again to the mirror. The facial pantomime was resumed, and then turning towards, but evidently not seeing, me, he began talking rapidly in a low voice. Ceasing this soon, however, he returned once more to his desk, where he remained silently writing until luncheon time. It was a most curious experience for me, and one of which I did not, until later years, fully appreciate the purport. Then I knew that with his natural intensity he had thrown himself completely into the character that he was creating, and that for the time being he had not only lost sight of his surroundings, but had actually become in action, as in imagination, the creature of his pen.

His "studies" were always cheery, pleasant rooms, and always, like himself, the personification of neatness and tidiness. On the shelf of his writing-table were many dainty and useful ornaments, gifts from his friends or members of his family, and always a vase of bright and fresh flowers. The first study that I remember is the one in our Devonshire Terrace home, a pretty room, with steps leading directly into the garden from it, and with an extra baize door to keep out all sounds and noise. The study at Tavistock House was more elaborate; a fine large room, opening into the drawing-room by means of sliding doors. When the rooms were thrown together they gave my father a promenade of considerable length for the constant indoor walking which formed a favourite recreation for him after a hard day's writing.

At Gadshill he first made a study from one of the large spare sleeping rooms of the house, as the windows there overlooked a beautiful and favourite view of his. His writing-table was always placed near a window looking out into the open world which he loved so keenly. After-

wards he occupied for years a smaller room overlooking the back garden and a pretty meadow, but this he eventually turned into a miniature billiard room, and then he established himself, finally, in the room on the right side of the entrance hall facing the front garden. It is this room which Mr. Luke Fields, the great artist and our own esteemed friend, made famous in his picture "The Empty Chair," which he sketched for "The Graphic" after my father's death. The writing-table, the ornaments, the huge waste-paper basket, which "the master" had made for his own use, are all there, and, alas, the empty chair!

That he was always in earnest, that he lived with his creations, that their joys and sorrows were his joys and sorrows, that at times his anguish, both of body and spirit, was poignant and heart-breaking, I know. His interest in and love for his characters were intense as his nature, and are shown nowhere more strongly than in his sufferings during his portrayal of the short life of "Little Nell." Like a father he mourned for his little girl—the child of his brain—and he writes: "I am, for the time, nearly dead with work and grief for the loss of my child." Again he writes of her: "You can't imagine (gravely I write and speak) how exhausted I am to-day with yesterday's labours. I went to bed last night utterly dispirited and done up. All night I have been pursued by the child; and this morning I am unrefreshed and miserable. I do not know what to do with myself."

His love and care for this little one are shown most pathetically in the suggestions which he gave to Mr. George Cattermole for his illustrations of "The Old Curiosity Shop." "Kit, the single gentleman, and Mr. Garland go down to the place where the child is and arrive there at night. There has been a fall of snow. Kit, leaving them behind, runs to the old house, and with a lantern in one hand, and the bird in its cage in the other, stops for a moment at a little distance, with a natural hesitation, before he goes up to make his presence known. In a window—supposed to be that of the child's little room—a light is burning, and in that room the child (unknown, of course, to her visitors, who are full of hope) lies dead."

Again: "The child lying dead in the little sleeping-room, behind the open screen. It is winter time, so there are no flowers, but upon her breast and pillow there may be

strips of holly and berries and such green things. A window, overgrown with ivy. The little boy who had that talk with her about the angels may be by the bedside, if you like it so; but I think it will be quieter and more peaceful if she is quite alone. I want the scene to express the most beautiful repose and tranquillity, and to have something of a happy look, if death can."

Another: "The child has been buried within the church, and the old man, who cannot be made to understand that she is dead, repairs to the grave and sits there all day long, waiting for her arrival to begin another journey. His staff and knapsack, her little bonnet and basket, lie beside him. 'She'll come to-morrow,' he says, when it gets dark, and then goes sorrowfully home. I think an hour glass running out would keep up the notion; perhaps her little things upon his knee or in his hand. I am breaking my heart over this story, and cannot bear to finish it."

In acknowledging the receipt of a letter concerning this book from Mr. John Tomlin, an American, he wrote: "I thank you cordially and heartily for your letter, and for its kind and courteous terms. To think that I have awakened among the vast solitudes in which you dwell a fellow-feeling and sympathy with the creatures of many thoughtful hours, is the source of the purest delight and pride to me; and believe me that your expressions of affectionate remembrance and approval, sounding from the green forests of the Mississippi, sink deeper into my heart and gratify it more than all the honorary distinctions that all the courts of Europe could confer. It is such things as these that make one hope one does not live in vain, and that are the highest rewards of an author's life."

His genius for character sketching needs no proof—his characters live to vouch for themselves, for their reality. It is ever amazing to me that the hand which drew the pathetic and beautiful creations, the kindly-humoured men, the lovely women, the unfortunate little ones, could portray also with such marvellous accuracy the villainy and craftiness of such characters as Bumble, Bill Sikes, Pecksniff, Uriah Heep and Squeers. Undoubtedly from his earliest childhood he had possessed the quick perception, the instinct, which could read in people's characters their tendencies towards good and evil, and throughout his life he valued this ability above literary skill and finish.

Mr. Forster makes a point of this in his biography, speaking of the noticeable traits in him: "What I had most, indeed, to notice in him at the very outset of his career, was his indifference to any praise of his performances on their merely literary merit, compared with the higher recognition of them as bits of actual life, with the meaning and purpose on their part, and the responsibility on his, of realities rather than creatures of fancy."

But he was always pleased with praise, and always modest and grateful in returning it. "How can I thank you?" he writes to a friend who was expressing his pleasure at "Oliver Twist." "Can I do better than by saying that the sense of poor Oliver's reality, which I know you have had from the first, has been the highest of all praise to me? None that has been lavished upon me have I felt half so much as that appreciation of my intent and meaning. Your notices make me very grateful, but very proud, so have a care."

The impressions which were later converted into motives and plots for his stories he imbibed often in his earliest childhood. The crusade against the Yorkshire schools which is waged in "Nicholas Nickleby," is the working out of some of these childish impressions. He writes himself of them: "I cannot call to mind how I came to hear about Yorkshire schools, when I was not a very robust child, sitting in by-places near Rochester Castle with a head full of Partridge, Strap, Tom Pipes and Sancho Panza, but I know my first impressions of the schools were picked up at this time." We can imagine how deeply the wrongs must have sunk into the sensitive heart of the child, rankling there through many years, to bear fruit in the scourging of them and their abuses from the land. While he was at work upon "Nicholas Nickleby," he sent one of his characteristic letters in reply to a little boy—Master Hasting Hughes—who wrote to ask him to make some changes in the story. As some of you may not have read this letter, and as it is so extremely amusing, I shall quote part of it:

"DOUGHTY STREET, LONDON.
"December 12th, 1838.

"Respected Sir: I have given Squeers one cut on the neck, and two on the head, at which he appeared much

surprised, and began to cry, which, being a cowardly thing, is just what I should have expected from him—wouldn't you?

"I have carefully done what you told me in your letter about the lamb and the two 'sheeps' for the little boys. They have also had some good ale and porter and some wine. I am sorry you did not say what wine you would like them to have. I gave them some sherry, which they liked very much, except one boy who was a little sick and choked a good deal. He was rather greedy, and that's the truth, and I believe it went the wrong way, which I say served him right, and I hope you will say so too. Nick has had his roast lamb, as you said he was to, but he could not eat it all, and says if you do not mind his doing so he should like to have the rest hashed to-morrow with some greens, which he is very fond of, and so am I. He said he did not like to have his porter hot, for he thought it spoilt the flavour, so I let him have it cold. You should have seen him drink it. I thought he never would have left off. I also gave him three pounds in money, all in sixpences to make it seem more, and he said directly that he should give more than half to his mamma and sister, and divide the rest with poor Smike. And I say he is a good fellow for saying so; and if anybody says he isn't, I am ready to fight him whenever they like—there!

"Fanny Squeers shall be attended to, depend upon it. Your drawing of her is very like, except that I do not think the hair is quite curly enough. The nose is particularly like hers, and so are the legs. She is a nasty, disagreeable thing, and I know it will make her very cross when she sees it, and what I say is that I hope it may. You will say the same, I know—at least I think you will."

The amount of work which he could accomplish varied greatly at certain times, though in its entirety it was so immense. When he became the man of letters, and ceased the irregular, unmethodical life of the reporter, his mornings were invariably spent at his desk. The time between breakfast and luncheon, with an occasional extension of a couple of hours into the afternoon, was given over to his creations. The exceptions were when he was taking a holiday or resting, though even when ostensibly employed in the latter, cessation from story writing meant the answering of letters and the closer attention to his

business matters, so that but little of real rest ever came into his later life.

While in Italy he gave a fragmentary diary of his daily life in a letter to a friend, and the routine was there very much what it was at home. "I am in a regular ferocious excitement with the Chimes; get up at seven; have a cold bath before breakfast; and blaze away, wrathful and red-hot, until three o'clock or so, when I usually knock off (unless it rains) for the day. I am fierce to finish in a spirit bearing some affinity to that of truth and mercy, and to shame the cruel and the wicked, but it is hard work." His entire discomfort under sound interruptions is also shown in the above, in his reference to the Chimes, and the effect which they had upon him.

Despite his regularity of working hours, as I have said, the amount of work which my father accomplished varied greatly. His manuscripts were usually written upon white "slips," though sometimes upon blue paper, and there were many mornings when it would be impossible for him to fill one of these. He writes on one occasion: "I am sitting at home, patiently waiting for Oliver Twist, who has not yet arrived." And, indeed, Oliver gave him considerable trouble, in the course of his adventures, by his disinclination to be put upon paper easily. This slowness in writing marked more prominently the earlier period of my father's literary career, though these "blank days," when his brain refused to work, were of occasional occurrence to the end. He was very critical of his own labours, and would bring nothing but the best of his brain to the art which he so dearly loved—his venerated mistress. But, on the other hand, the amount of work which he would accomplish at other times was almost incredible. During a long sojourn at Lausanne he writes: "I have not been idle since I have been here. I had a good deal to write for Lord John about the ragged schools; so I set to work and did that. A good deal to Miss Coutts, in reference to her charitable projects; so I set to work and did that. Half of the children's New Testament to write, or pretty nearly. I set to work and did that. Next, I cleared off the greater part of such correspondence as I had rashly pledged myself to, and then—began Dombey!"

I know of only one occasion on which he employed an amanuensis, and my aunt is my authority for the follow-

ing, concerning this one time: "The book which your father dictated to me was 'The Child's History of England.' The reason for my being used in this capacity of secretary was that 'Bleak House' was being written at the same time, and your father would dictate to me while walking about the room, as a relief after his long, sedentary imprisonment. The history was being written for 'Household Words,' and 'Bleak House' also as a serial, so he had both weekly and monthly work on hand at the same time." The history was dedicated: "To my own dear children, whom I hope it will help, by-and-by, to read with interest larger and better books upon the same subject."

My father wrote always with a quill pen and blue ink, and never, I think, used a lead-pencil. His handwriting was considered extremely difficult to read by many people, but I never found it so. In his manuscripts there were so many erasures, and such frequent interlineations that a special staff of compositors was used for his work, but this was not on account of any illegibility in his handwriting. The manuscripts are most of them exhibited at the South Kensington Museum in "the Forster Collection," and they all show, I think, the extreme care and fastidiousness of the writer, and his ever-constant desire to improve upon and simplify his original sentence. His objection to the use of a lead-pencil was so great that even his personal memoranda, such as his lists of guests for dinner parties, the arrangement of tables and menus, were always written in ink. For his personal correspondence he used blue note-paper, and signed his name in the left-hand corner of the envelope. After a morning's close work he was sometimes quite pre-occupied when he came in to luncheon. Often, when we were only our home party at Gadshill, he would come in, take something to eat in a mechanical way—he never ate but a small luncheon—and would return to his study to finish the work he had left, scarcely having spoken a word in all this time. Again, he would come in, having finished his work, but looking very tired and worn. Our talking at these times did not seem to disturb him, though any sudden sound, as the dropping of a spoon, or the clinking of a glass, would send a spasm of pain across his face.

The sudden, almost instantaneous, popularity of "Pick-

wick" was known to the world long before it was re
by its anxious young author. All the business transa
concerning its publication were modest to a degree
the preparations for such a success as came to it
none. As to its popularity, Mr. Forster writes: "J
on the bench, and boys in the streets, gravity and
the young and the old, those who were entering life
those who were quitting it, alike found it irresist
Carlyle wrote: "An archdeacon repeated to me, wit
own venerable lips, the other evening, a strange, pr
story of a solemn clergyman who had been summon
administer consolation to a very ill man. As he le
room he heard the sick man ejaculate: 'Well, thank
Pickwick will be out in ten days, anyway!'" No
author ever sprang into more sudden and brilliant
than "Boz," and none could have remained more
oughly unspoiled, or so devoid of egotism under su
His own opinion of his fame, and his estimate of its
may be quoted here: "To be numbered amongst the
hold gods of one's distant countrymen, and asso
with their homes and quiet pleasures; to be told t
each nook and corner of the world's great mass ther
one well-wisher who holds communion with one
spirit, is a worthy fame, indeed. That I may be
enough to cheer some of your leisure hours for
time to come, and to hold a place in your pl
thoughts, is the earnest wish of 'Boz.'"

On the Christmas Eve of 1863 my father was
shocked and distressed to hear of the sudden de
Mr. Thackeray. Our guests, naturally, were full
sad news, and there was a gloom cast over everythin
all thought of the sorrow of his two daughters, wh
so devoted to him, and whom his sudden takin
would leave so desolate. In the "Cornhill Magazi
the February following, my father wrote: "I s
Thackeray for the first time nearly twenty-eight ye
when he proposed to become the illustrator of my
book. I saw him last shortly before Christmas,
Athenæum Club, when he told me he had been
three days, and that he had it in his mind to tr
remedy, which he laughingly described. He was c
and looked very bright. In the night of that d
he died. . . . No one can be surer than I of the g

and goodness of his heart. In no place should I take it upon myself at this time to discourse of his books, of his refined knowledge of character, of his subtle acquaintance with the weakness of human nature, of his delightful playfulness as an essayist, of his quaint and touching ballads, of his mastery over the English language. But before me lies all that he had written of his latest story, and the pain I have felt in perusing it has not been deeper than the conviction that he was in the healthiest region of his powers when he worked on this last labour. The last words he corrected in print were 'and my heart throbbed with an exquisite bliss.' God grant that on that Christmas Eve, when he laid his head back on his pillow and threw up his arms as he had been wont to do when very weary, some consciousness of duty done, and of Christian hope throughout life humbly cherished, may have caused his own heart so to throb when he passed away to his rest."

CHAPTER IV.

As a child my father was prevented from any active participation in the sports and amusements of his boyish companions by his extreme delicacy and frequent illnesses, so that until his manhood his knowledge of games was gained merely from long hours of watching others while lying upon the grass. With manhood, however, came the strength and activity which enabled him to take part in all kinds of outdoor exercise and sports, and it seemed that in his passionate enjoyment and participation in those later years he was recompensed for the weary childhood years of suffering and inability. Athletic sports were a passion with him in his manhood, as I have said. In 1839 he rented a cottage at Petersham, not far from London, "where," to quote from Mr. Forster, "the extensive garden grounds admitted of much athletic competition, in which Dickens, for the most part, held his own against even such accomplished athletes as Maclise and Mr. Beard. Bar-leaping, bowling, and quoits were among the games carried on with the greatest ardour, and in sustained energy Dickens certainly distanced every competitor. Even

the lighter recreations of battledore and bagatelle were pursued with relentless activity. At such amusements as the Petersham races, in those days rather celebrated, and which he visited daily while they lasted, he worked much harder than the running horses did."

Riding was a favourite recreation at all times with my father, and he was constantly inviting one or another of his friends to bear him company on these excursions. Always fond, in his leisure hours, of companions, he seemed to find his rides and walks quite incomplete if made alone. As a young man he was extremely fond of riding, but as I never remember seeing him on horse-back I think he must have deprived himself of this pastime soon after his marriage.

But walking was, perhaps, his chiefest pleasure, and the country lanes and city streets alike found him a close observer of their beauties and interests. He was a rapid walker, his usual pace being four miles an hour, and to keep step with him required energy and activity similar to his own. In many of his letters he speaks with most evident enjoyment of this pastime. In one he writes: "What a brilliant morning for a country walk! I start precisely —precisely, mind—at half-past one. Come, come, come and walk in the green lanes!" Again: "You don't feel disposed, do you, to muffle yourself up and start off with me for a good, brisk walk over Hampstead Heath?"

Outdoor games of the simpler kinds delighted him. Battledore and shuttlecock was played constantly in the garden at Devonshire Terrace, though I do not remember my father ever playing it elsewhere. The American games of bowls pleased him, and rounders found him more than expert. Croquet he disliked, but cricket he enjoyed intensely as a spectator, always keeping one of the scores during the matches at Gadshill.

He was a firm believer in the hygiene of bathing, and cold baths, sea baths and shower baths were among his most constant practices. In those days scientific ablution was not very generally practised, and I am sure that in many places during his travels my father was looked upon as an amiable maniac with a penchant for washing.

During his first visit to America, while he was making some journey in a rather rough and uncomfortable canal boat, he wrote: "I am considered very hardy in the morn-

ing, for I run up barenecked and plunge my head into the half-frozen water by half-past five o'clock. I am respected for my activity, inasmuch as I jump from the boat to the towing path, and walk five or six miles before breakfast, keeping up with the horses all the time." And from Broadstairs: "In a bay window sits, from nine o'clock to one, a gentleman with rather long hair and no neckcloth, who writes and grins as if he thought he were very funny, indeed. At one o'clock he disappears. presently emerges from a bathing machine, and may be seen a kind of salmon-coloured porpoise, splashing about in the ocean. After that, he may be viewed in another bay window on the ground floor, eating a good lunch; and after that walking a dozen miles or so, or lying on his back on the sand reading. Nobody bothers him, unless they know he is disposed to be talked to; and I am told he is very comfortable, indeed."

During the hottest summer months of our year's residence in Italy, we lived at a little seaport of the Mediterranean called Albaro. The bathing here was of the most primitive kind, one division of the clear, dark-blue pools among the rocks being reserved for women, the other for men, and as we children were as much at home in the water as any known variety of fish, we used to look with wonder at the so-called bathing of the Italian women. They would come in swarms, beautifully dressed, and with most elaborately arranged heads of hair, but the slightest of wettings with them was the equivalent of a bath. In the open bay at Albaro the current was very strong, and the bathing most dangerous to even an experienced swimmer. I remember one morning the terrible fright we were given by an uncle of ours; he swam out into the bay, was caught by the current of an ebb tide and borne out of reach of our eyes. A fishing boat picked him up still alive. though greatly exhausted. "It was a world of horror and anguish crowded into four or five minutes of dreadful agitation," wrote my father, "and to complete the terror of it the entire family, including the children, were on the rock in full view of it all, crying like mad creatures."

He loved animals, flowers and birds, his fondness for the latter being shown nowhere more strongly than in his devotion to his ravens at Devonshire Terrace. He writes characteristically of the death of Grip, the first raven:

"You will be greatly shocked and grieved to hear that the Raven is no more. He expired to-day at a few minutes after twelve o'clock, at noon. He had been ailing for a few days, but we anticipated no serious result, conjecturing that a portion of the white paint he swallowed last summer might be lingering about his vitals. Yesterday afternoon he was taken so much worse that I sent an express for the medical gentleman, who promptly attended and administered a powerful dose of castor oil. Under the influence of this medicine he recovered so far as to be able, at eight o'clock, P.M., to bite Topping [the coachman]. His night was peaceful. This morning, at daybreak, he appeared better, and partook plentifully of some warm gruel, the flavour of which he appeared to relish. Towards eleven o'clock he was so much worse that it was found necessary to muffle the stable-knocker. At half-past, or thereabouts, he was heard talking to himself about the horse and Topping's family, and to add some incoherent expressions which are supposed to have been either a foreboding of his approaching dissolution or some wishes relative to the disposal of his little property, consisting chiefly of halfpence which he had buried in different parts of the garden. On the clock striking twelve he appeared slightly agitated, but he soon recovered, walked twice or thrice along the coach-house, stopped to bark, staggered, and exclaimed *Halloa, old girl!* (his favourite expression) and died. He behaved throughout with decent fortitude, equanimity and self-possession. I deeply regret that, being in ignorance of his danger, I did not attend to receive his last instructions.

"Something remarkable about his eyes occasioned Topping to run for the doctor at twelve. When they returned together, our friend was gone. It was the medical gentleman who informed me of his decease. He did it with great caution and delicacy, preparing me by the remark that 'a jolly queer start had taken place.' I am not wholly free from suspicions of poison. A malicious butcher had been heard to say that he would 'do' for him. His plea was that he would not be molested in taking orders down the mews by any bird that wore a tail. Were they ravens who took manna to somebody in the wilderness? At times I hope they were, and at others I fear they were not, or they would certainly have stolen it by the way. Kate is

as well as can be expected. The children seem rather glad of it. He bit their ankles, but that was in play." As my father was writing "Barnaby Rudge" at this time, and wished to continue his study of raven nature, another and a larger Grip took the place of "our friend," but it was he whose talking tricks and comical ways gave my father the idea of making a raven one of the characters in this book. My father's fondness for Grip was, however, never transferred to any other raven, and none of us ever forgave the butcher, whom we all held in some way responsible for his untimely taking off.

But I think his strongest love, among animals, was for dogs. I find a delightful anecdote told by him of a dog belonging to a lady whom he knew well, Of, an immense, black, good-humoured, Newfoundland dog. He came from Oxford and had lived all his life in a brewery. Instructions were given with him that if he were let out every morning alone he would immediately find out the river, regularly take a swim and come gravely home again. This he did with the greatest punctuality, but after a little while was observed to smell of beer. His owner was so sure that he smelled of beer that she resolved to watch him. He was seen to come back from his swim round the usual corner and to go up a flight of steps into a beer-shop. Being instantly followed, the beer shopkeeper is seen to take down a pot (pewter pot) and is heard to say: "Well, old chap, come up for your beer as usual, have you?" Upon which he draws a pint and puts it down and the dog drinks it. Being required to explain how this comes to pass the man says: "Yes, ma'am. I know he's your dog, ma'am, but I didn't when he first came. He looked in, ma'am, as a brickmaker might, and then he come in, as a brickmaker might, and he wagged his tail at the pots, and he giv a sniff round and conveyed to me as he was used to beer. So I draw'd him a drop, and he drunk it up. Next morning he come agen by the clock and I draw'd him a pint, and ever since he has took his pint reg'lar."

On account of our birds, cats were not allowed in the house; but from a friend in London I received a present of a white kitten—Williamina—and she and her numerous offspring had a happy home at Gadshill. She became a favourite with all the household, and showed particular

devotion to my father. I remember on one occasion when she had presented us with a family of kittens, she selected a corner of father's study for their home. She brought them one by one from the kitchen and deposited them in her chosen corner. My father called to me to remove them, saying that he could not allow the kittens to remain in his room. I did so, but Williamina brought them back again, one by one. Again they were removed. The third time, instead of putting them in the corner, she placed them all, and herself beside them, at my father's feet, and gave him such an imploring glance that he could resist no longer, and they were allowed to remain. As the kittens grew older they became more and more frolicsome, swarming up the curtains, playing about on the writing-table and scampering behind the bookshelves. But they were never complained of and lived happily in the study until the time came for finding them other homes. One of these kittens was kept, who, as he was quite deaf, was left unnamed, and became known by the servants as "the master's cat," because of his devotion to my father. He was always with him, and used to follow him about the garden like a dog, and sit with him while he wrote. One evening we were all, except father, going to a ball, and when we started, left "the master" and his cat in the drawing-room together. "The master" was reading at a small table, on which a lighted candle was placed. Suddenly the candle went out. My father, who was much interested in his book, relighted the candle, stroked the cat, who was looking at him pathetically he noticed, and continued his reading. A few minutes later, as the light became dim, he looked up just in time to see puss deliberately put out the candle with his paw, and then look appealingly towards him. This second and unmistakable hint was not disregarded, and puss was given the petting he craved. Father was full of this anecdote when all met at breakfast the next morning.

Among our dogs were Turk and Linda, the former a beautiful mastiff and the latter a soft-eyed, gentle, good-tempered St. Bernard. Mrs. Bouncer, a Pomeranian, came next, a tiny ball of white fluffy fur, who came as a special gift to me, and speedily won her way by her grace and daintiness into the affections of every member of the household. My father became her special slave, and had

a peculiar voice for her—as he had for us, when we were children—to which she would respond at once by running to him from any part of the house when she heard his call. He delighted to see her with the large dogs, with whom she gave herself great airs, "because," as he said, "she looks so preposterously small." A few years later came Don, a Newfoundland, and then Bumble, his son, named after "Oliver Twist's" beadle, because of "a peculiarly pompous and overbearing manner he had of appearing to mount guard over the yard when he was an absolute infant." Lastly came Sultan, an Irish bloodhound, who had a bitter experience with his life at Gadshill. One evening, having broken his chain, he fell upon a little girl who was passing and bit her so severely that my father considered it necessary to have him shot, although this decision cost him a great deal of sorrow.

For a short time I had the care of a mongrel called Gipsy. She was not allowed to enter any of the family rooms, and used to spend her time lying contentedly on the rug outside the drawing-room. One afternoon a friend came from Chatham bringing with him a wonderful poodle who had been specially invited to perform all his tricks for my father's enjoyment. On his arrival, Mrs. Bouncer became furious, and when he began his tricks she went deliberately into the hall and escorted Gipsy into the drawing-room, as much as to say: "I can't stand this. If strange dogs are to be made much of, surely the dogs in the house may be at least permitted to enter the room." She would not look at Fosco, the poodle, but sat throughout his performance with her back towards him, the picture of offended dignity. Just as soon, however, as he was fairly out of the house, and not until then, she escorted Gipsy back to her rug. My father was intensely amused by this behaviour of Bouncer's and delighted in telling this story about her.

Mrs. Bouncer was honoured by many messages from her master during his absences from home. Here is one written as I was convalescing from a serious illness: "In my mind's eye I behold Mrs. Bouncer, still with some traces of anxiety on her faithful countenance, balancing herself a little unequally on her forelegs, pricking up her ears with her head on one side, and slightly opening her intellectual nostrils. I send my loving and respectful duty

to her." Again: "Think of my dreaming of Mrs. Bouncer, each night!!!"

My father's love for dogs led him into a strange friendship during our stay at Boulogne. There lived in a cottage on the street which led from our house to the town, a cobbler who used to sit at his window working all day with his dog—a Pomeranian—on the table beside him. The cobbler, in whom my father became very much interested because of the intelligence of his Pomeranian companion, was taken ill, and for many months was unable to work. My father writes: "The cobbler has been ill these many months. The little dog sits at the door so unhappy and anxious to help that I every day expect to see him beginning a pair of top-boots." Another time father writes in telling the history of this little animal: "A cobbler at Boulogne, who had the nicest of little dogs that always sat in his sunny window watching him at his work, asked me if I would bring the dog home, as he couldn't afford to pay the tax for him. The cobbler and the dog being both my particular friends, I complied. The cobbler parted with the dog heartbroken. When the dog got home here, my man, like an idiot as he is, tied him up and then untied him. The moment the gate was open, the dog (on the very day after his arrival) ran out. Next day Georgy and I saw him lying all covered with mud, dead, outside the neighbouring church. How am I ever to tell the cobbler? He is too poor to come to England, so I feel that I must lie to him for life, and say that the dog is fat and happy."

Of horses and ponies we possessed but few during our childhood, and these were not of very choice breed. I remember, however, one pretty pony which was our delight, and dear old Toby, the good sturdy horse which for many years we used at Gadshill. My father, however, was very fond of horses, and I recall hearing him comment on the strange fact that an animal "so noble in its qualities should be the cause of so much villainy."

CHAPTER V.

THE warm affection which was so characteristic of my father towards people was also directed, as I have already told, towards animals and birds. A few further anecdotes occur to me, and I have ventured to give them here, before proceeding to tell of his visit to America, his readings, and the, to me, sad story of his last public appearance.

My father's quick and amusing observation of London birds and their habits, and of their fondness for "low company," is full of charm and quaint oddity. He writes: "That anything born of an egg and invested with wings should have got to the pass that it hops contentedly down a ladder into a cellar, and calls that going home, is a circumstance so amazing as to leave one nothing more in this connection to wonder at. I know a low fellow, originally of a good family from Dorking, who takes his whole establishment of wives in single file in at the door of the jug department of a disorderly tavern near the Haymarket, manœuvres them among the company's legs, and emerges with them at the bottle entrance, seldom in the season going to bed before two in the morning. And thus he passes his life. But the family I am best acquainted with resides in the densest part of Bethnal Green. Their abstraction from the objects in which they live, or rather their conviction that these objects have all come into existence in express subservience to fowls, has so enchanted me that I have made them the subject of many journeys at divers hours. After careful observation of the two lords and of the ten ladies of whom this family consists, I have come to the conclusion that their opinions are represented by the leading lord and leading lady, the latter, as I judge, an aged personage, afflicted with a paucity of feather and visibility of quill that gives her the appearance of a bundle of office pens. They look upon old shoes, wrecks of kettles, saucepans and fragments of bonnets as a kind of meteoric discharge for fowls to peck at. Gaslight comes quite as natural to them as any other light; and I have more than a suspicion that in the minds of the two lords, the early public house at the corner has

superseded the sun. They always begin to crow when the public house shutters begin to be taken down, and they salute the potboy the instant he appears to perform that duty, as if he were Phœbus in person."

During one of his walks through the slums, my father was so fascinated by the intelligence of a busy goldfinch drawing water for himself in his cage—he had other accomplishments as well—that he went in and bought it. But not a thing would the little bird do, not a trick would he perform when he got to his new home in Doughty Street, and would only draw up water in the dark or when he thought no one was looking. "After an interval of futile and at length hopeless expectation," my father writes, "the merchant who had educated him was appealed to. The merchant was a bow-legged character, with a flat and cushiony nose, like the last new strawberry. He wore a fur cap and shorts, and was of the velveteen race velveteeny. He sent word that he would 'look round.' He looked round, appeared in the doorway of the room, and slightly cocked up his evil eye at the goldfinch. Instantly a raging thirst beset the bird, and when it was appeased he still drew several unnecessary buckets of water, leaping about the perch and sharpening his bill with irrepressible satisfaction."

While at Broadstairs one summer, our bathing-woman, who reared birds, gave a canary to my sister and myself. Dick, who was only a few weeks old when he came to us, grew to be a very king of birds, and became in time a most important member of the household. There was a fierce war waged against cats during his lifetime, and writing from Boulogne my father very funnily describes our troubles with the feline race: "War is raging against two particularly tigerish and fearful cats (from the mill, I suppose), which are always glaring in dark corners after our wonderful little Dick. Keeping the house open at all points, it is impossible to shut them out, and they hide themselves in the most terrific manner, hanging themselves up behind draperies like bats, and tumbling out in the dead of night with frightful caterwaulings. Hereupon French [the footman] borrows Beaucourt's gun, loads the same to the muzzle, discharges it twice in vain, and throws himself over with the recoil exactly like a clown. But at last (while I was in town) he aims at the more amiable

cat of the two and shoots that animal dead. Insufferably elated by this victory, he is now engaged from morning to night in hiding behind bushes to get aim at the other. He does nothing else whatever. All the boys encourage him and watch for the enemy, on whose appearance they give an alarm, which immediately serves as a warning to the creature, who runs away. They—the boys—are at this moment (ready dressed for church) all lying on their stomachs in various parts of the garden. I am afraid to go out lest I should be shot. Mr. Plornish says his prayers at night in a whisper, lest the cat should overhear him and take offence. The tradesmen cry out as they come up the avenue: '*My voici! C'est moi—boulanger—me tirez pas, Monsieur Franche!*' It is like living in a state of siege, and the wonderful manner in which the cat preserves the character of being the only person not much put out by the intensity of this monomania is most ridiculous. The finest thing is that immediately after I have heard the noble sportsman blazing away at her in the garden in front, I look out of my room door into the drawing-room, and am pretty sure to see her coming in after the bird, in the calmest manner, by the back window." But no harm ever came to "our wonderful little Dick," who lived to a ripe old age—sixteen years—and was buried under a rose-tree at Gadshill.

On his return from his last visit to America he wrote a charming account of his welcome home by the dogs at Gadshill. "As you ask me about the dogs, I begin with them. When I came down first I came to Gravesend, five miles off. The two Newfoundland dogs coming to meet me with the usual carriage and the usual driver, and beholding me coming in my usual dress out at the usual door, it struck me that their recollection of my having been absent for any unusual time was at once cancelled. They behaved (they are both young dogs) exactly in their usual manner, coming behind the basket phaeton as we trotted along and lifting their heads to have their ears pulled, a special attention which they received from no one else. But when I drove into the stableyard, Linda was greatly excited; weeping profusely, and throwing herself on her back that she might caress my foot with her great forepaws. Mamie's little dog, too, Mrs. Bouncer, barked in the greatest agitation on being called down and

asked: 'Who is this?' tore round me, like the dog in the Faust outlines."

My father brought with him, on his return from his first visit to America, a small, shaggy Havana spaniel, which had been given to him and which he had named Timber Doodle. He wrote of him: "Little doggy improves rapidly and now jumps over my stick at the word of command." Timber travelled with us in all our foreign wanderings, and while at Albaro the poor little fellow had a most unfortunate experience—an encounter of some duration with a plague of fleas. Father writes: "Timber has had every hair upon his body cut off because of the fleas, and he looks like the ghost of a drowned dog come out of a pond after a week or so. It is very awful to see him sidle into a room. He knows the change upon him, and is always turning round and round to look for himself. I think he'll die of grief; it is to be hoped that the hair will grow again."

For many years my father's public readings were an important part of his life, and into their performance and preparation he threw the best energy of his heart and soul, practising and rehearsing at all times and places. The meadow near our home was a favourite place, and people passing through the lane, not knowing who he was, or what doing, must have thought him a madman from his reciting and gesticulation. The great success of these readings led to many tempting offers from the United States, which, as time went on, and we realised how much the fatigue of the readings together with his other work was sapping his strength, we earnestly opposed his even considering. However, after much discussion and deliberation he wrote to me on September 28, 1867: "As I telegraphed after I saw you I am off to consult with Mr. Forster and Dolby together. You shall hear either on Monday or by Monday's post from London how I decide finally." Three days later: "You will have had my telegram that I go to America. After a long discussion with Forster and consideration of what is to be said on both sides, I have decided to go through with it, and have telegraphed 'yes' to Boston." There was, at first, some talk of my accompanying him, but when the programme of the tour was submitted to my father and he saw how much time must be devoted to business and how little, indeed almost no

time could be given to sight-seeing, this idea was given up.

A farewell banquet was given him in London on the second of November, and on the ninth he sailed. A large party of us went to Liverpool to see him sail, and with heavy hearts to bid him farewell. In those days a journey to America was a serious matter, and we felt in our hearts that he was about to tax his health and strength too cruelly. And so he did.

Soon after reaching the United States, my father contracted a severe cold, which never left him during his visit, and which caused him the greatest annoyance. I will give you a few quotations from his letters to show how pluckily he fought against his ailment and under what a strain he continued his work. On his arrival at New York on Christmas Day, in response to a letter of mine which awaited him there, he wrote: "I wanted your letter much, for I had a frightful cold (English colds are nothing to those of this country) and was very miserable." He adds to this letter, a day or two later: "I managed to read last night, but it was as much as I could do. To-day I am so unwell that I have sent for a doctor." Again he writes: "It likewise happens, not seldom, that I am so dead beat when I come off the stage, that they lay me down on a sofa after I have been washed and dressed, and I lie there extremely faint for a quarter of an hour. In that time I rally and come right." Again: "On the afternoon of my birthday my catarrh was in such a state that Charles Sumner coming in at five o'clock and finding me covered with mustard poultices and apparently voiceless, turned to Dolby and said: 'Surely, Mr. Dolby, it is impossible that he can read to-night.' Says Dolby: 'Sir, I have told Mr. Dickens so four times to-day, and I have been very anxious. But you have no idea how he will change when he gets to the little table.' After five minutes of the little table I was not, for the time, even hoarse. The frequent experience of this return of force when it is wanted saves me much anxiety, but I am not at times without the nervous dread that I may some day sink altogether."

But as a reward for his unstinted self-giving came the wonderful success of his tour, the pride and delight which he felt in the enthusiasm which greeted him everywhere, the personal affection lavished upon him, and the many

dear friends he made. He writes from Boston, apropos of these rewards: "When we reached here last Saturday night we found that Mrs. Fields had not only garnished the room with flowers, but also with holly (with real red berries), and festoons of moss dependent from the looking-glasses and picture-frames. The homely Christmas look of the place quite affected us."

Later, from Washington: "I couldn't help laughing at myself on my birthday here; it was observed as much as though I were a little boy. Flowers and garlands of the most exquisite kind, arranged in all manner of green baskets, bloomed over the room; letters, radiant with good wishes, poured in. Also, by hands unknown, the hall at night was decorated; and after 'Boots at the Holly Tree Inn' the audience rose, great people and all, standing and cheering until I went back to the table and made them a little speech."

He wrote home constantly, giving frequent commissions for improvements at Gadshill, to be made before his return. He was much impressed on his second visit, as on his first, I remember, with the beauty of the American women. "The ladies are remarkably handsome," he wrote.

In the autumn of 1869 he began a series of farewell readings, which were another heavy tax upon his health and strength. During his tour at this time he writes to Mr. Forster after some rather alarming symptoms had developed: "I told Beard, a year after the Staplehurst accident, that I was certain that my heart had been fluttered and wanted a little helping. This the stethoscope confirmed; and considering the immense exertion I am undergoing, and the constant jarring of express trains, the case seems to me quite intelligible. Don't say anything in the 'Gad's' direction about my being a little out of sorts. I have broached the matter, of course, but very lightly."

But even such warning as this failed to make him realise how much less was his strength, and with indomitable courage and spirit he continued his tour. The trouble in his feet increased, and his sufferings from this cause were very great. It became necessary at one time for him to have a physician in attendance upon him at every reading. But in spite of his perseverance, he became so ill that the readings had to be stopped.

CHAPTER VI.

My father gave his last reading in St. James's Hall, London, on the fifteenth of March. The programme included "A Christmas Carol" and the "Trial" from "Pickwick." The hall was packed by an enormous audience, and he was greeted with all the warmth which the personal affection felt for the reader inspired. We all felt very anxious for him, fearing that the excitement and emotion which must attend upon his public farewell would have a bad effect upon him. But it had no immediate result, at any rate, much to our relief.

I do not think that my father ever—and this is saying a great deal—looked handsomer nor read with more ability than on this, his last appearance. Mr. Forster writes: "The charm of his reading was at its height when he shut the volume of 'Pickwick' and spoke in his own person. He said that for fifteen years he had been reading his own books to audiences whose sensitive and kindly recognition of them had given him instruction and enjoyment in his art such as few men could have had; but that he nevertheless thought it well now to retire upon older associations, and in future to devote himself exclusively to the calling which first made him known. 'In but two short weeks from this time I hope that you may enter in your own homes on a new series of readings, at which my assistance will be indispensable: but from these garish lights I vanish now, for evermore, with a heartfelt, grateful, respectful, affectionate farewell.'"

There was a dead silence as my father turned away, much moved; and then came from the audience such a burst and tumult of cheers and applause as were almost too much to bear, mixed as they were with personal love and affection for the man before them. He returned with us all to Gadshill, very happy and hopeful, under the temporary improvement which the rest and peace of his home brought him, and he settled down to his new book, "Edwin Drood," with increased pleasure and interest.

His last public appearances were in April. On the fifth he took the chair at the Newsvenders' dinner. On the thirtieth he returned thanks for "Literature" at the

Royal Academy banquet. In this speech he alluded to the death of his old friend, Daniel Maclise, winding up thus: "No artist, of whatsoever denomination, I make bold to say, ever went to his rest leaving a golden memory more pure from dross, or having devoted himself with a truer chivalry to the art-goddess whom he worshipped." These words, with the old, true, affectionate ring in them, were the last spoken by my father in public.

About 1865 my dear father's health began to give way, a peculiar affection of the foot, which frequently caused him the greatest agony and suffering, appearing about this time. Its real cause—overwork—was not suspected either by his physicians or himself, his vitality seeming something which could not wear out; but, although he was so active and full of energy, he was never really strong, and found soon that he must take more in the way of genuine recreation. He wrote me from France about this time: "Before I went away I had certainly worked myself into a damaged state. But the moment I got away I began, thank God, to get well. I hope to profit from this experience, and to make future dashes from my desk before I need them."

It was while on his way home after this trip that he was in the terrible railroad accident to which he afterwards referred in a letter to a friend, saying that his heart had never been in good condition after that accident. It occured on the ninth of June, a date which five years later was the day of his death.

He wrote * describing his experiences: "I was in the only carriage which did not go over into the stream. It was caught upon the turn by some of the ruin of the bridge, and hung suspended and balanced in an apparently impossible manner. Two ladies were my fellow-passengers, an old one and a young one. This is exactly what passed —you may judge from it the length of our suspense: Suddenly we were off the rail and beating the ground as the car of a half-emptied balloon might. The old lady cried out 'My God!' and the young one screamed. I caught hold of them both (the old lady sat opposite, and the young one on my left) and said: 'We can't help ourselves, but we can be quiet and composed. Pray, don't cry out!' The old lady immediately answered: 'Thank

* To Mr. Thomas Mitton.

you, rely upon me. Upon my soul I will be quiet.' We were then all tilted down together in a corner of the carriage, which then stopped. I said to them thereupon: 'You may be sure nothing worse can happen; our danger must be over. Will you remain here without stirring while I get out of the window?' They both answered quite collectedly 'Yes,' and I got out without the least notion of what had happened. Fortunately I got out with great caution, and stood upon the step. Looking down I saw the bridge gone, and nothing below me but the line of rail. Some people in the other two compartments were madly trying to plunge out at a window, and had no idea that there was an open, swampy field fifteen feet down below them, and nothing else. The two guards (one with his face cut) were running up and down on the down-track of the bridge (which was not torn up) quite wildly. I called out to them: 'Look at me! Do stop an instant and look at me, and tell me whether you don't know me?' One of them answered: 'We know you very well, Mr. Dickens.' 'Then,' I said, 'my good fellow, for God's sake, give me your key, and send one of those labourers here, and I'll empty this carriage.' We did it quite safely, by means of a plank or two, and when it was done I saw all the rest of the train, except the two baggage vans, down in the stream. I got into the carriage again for my brandy flask, took off my travelling hat for a basin, climbed down the brickwork, and filled my hat with water. Suddenly I came upon a staggering man, covered with blood (I think he must have been flung clean out of his carriage), with such a frightful cut across the skull that I couldn't bear to look at him. I poured some water over his face, and gave him some to drink, then gave him some brandy, and laid him down on the grass. He said, 'I am gone,' and died afterwards. Then I stumbled over a lady lying on her back against a little pollard tree, with the blood streaming over her face (which was lead colour) in a number of distinct little streams from the head. I asked her if she could swallow a little brandy, and she just nodded, and I gave her some and left her for somebody else. The next time I passed her she was dead. Then a man examined at the inquest yesterday (who evidently had not the least remembrance of what really passed) came running up to me and implored me to help him find his wife,

who was afterwards found dead. No imagination can conceive the ruin of the carriages, or the extraordinary weights under which the people were lying, or the complications into which they were twisted up among iron and wood, and mud and water. I am keeping very quiet here."

This letter was written from Gadshill four days after the accident. We were spared any anxiety about our father, as we did not hear of the accident until after we were with him in London. With his usual care and thoughtfulness he had telegraphed to his friend Mr. Wills, to summon us to town to meet him. The letter continues: "I have, I don't know what to call it, constitutional (I suppose) presence of mind, and was not the least fluttered at the time. I instantly remembered that I had the MS. of a number * with me, and clambered back into the carriage for it. But in writing these scanty words of recollection I feel the shake, and am obliged to stop."

We heard, afterwards, how helpful he had been at the time, ministering to the dying! How calmly and tenderly he cared for the suffering ones about him!

But he never recovered entirely from the shock. More than a year later he writes: "It is remarkable that my watch (a special chronometer) has never gone quite correctly since, and to this day there sometimes comes over me, on a railway and in a hansom cab, or any sort of conveyance, for a few seconds, a vague sense of dread that I have no power to check. It comes and passes, but I cannot prevent its coming."

I have often seen this dread come upon him, and on one occasion, which I especially recall, while we were on our way from London to our little country station, Higham, where the carriage was to meet us, my father suddenly clutched the arms of the railway carriage seat, while his face grew ashy pale, and great drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead, and though he tried hard to master the dread, it was so strong that he had to leave the train at the next station. The accident had left its impression upon the memory, and it was destined never to be effaced. The hours spent upon railroads were thereafter often hours of pain to him. I realised this often while travelling with him, and no amount of assurance could dispel the feeling.

* Of "Our Mutual Friend."

Early in May of 1868, we had him safely back with us, greatly strengthened and invigorated by his ocean journey home, and I think he was never happier at Gadshill than during his last two years there.

During that time he had a succession of guests, and none were more honoured, nor more heartily welcomed, than his American friends. The first of these to come, if I remember rightly, was Mr. Longfellow, with his daughters. My father writes describing a picnic which he gave them: "I turned out a couple of postilions in the old red jacket of the old Royal red for our ride, and it was like a holiday ride in England fifty years ago. Of course we went to look at the old houses in Rochester, and the old Cathedral, and the old castle, and the house for the six poor travellers.

"Nothing can surpass the respect paid to Longfellow here, from the Queen downward. He is everywhere received and courted, and finds the working men at least as well acquainted with his books as the classes socially above them."

Between the comings and goings of visitors there were delightfully quiet evenings at home, spent during the summer in our lovely porch, or walking about the garden, until "tray time," ten o'clock. When the cooler nights came we had music in the drawing-room, and it is my happiness now to remember on how many evenings I played and sang all his favourite songs and tunes to my father during these last winters, while he would listen while he smoked or read, or, in his more usual fashion, paced up and down the room. I never saw him more peacefully contented than at these times.

There were always "improvements"—as my father used to call his alterations—being made at Gadshill, and each improvement was supposed to be the last. As each was completed, my sister—who was always a constant visitor, and an exceptionally dear one to my father—would have to come down and inspect, and as each was displayed, my father would say to her most solemnly: "Now, Katie, you behold your parent's latest and last achievement." These "last improvements" became quite a joke between them. I remember so well, on one such occasion, after the walls and doors of the drawing-room had been lined with mirrors, my sister's laughing speech to "the master":

"I believe, papa, that when you become an angel your wings will be made of looking-glass and your crown of scarlet geraniums."

And here I would like to correct an error concerning myself. I have been spoken of as my father's "favourite daughter." If he had a favourite daughter—and I hope and believe that the one was as dear to him as the other—my dear sister must claim that honour. I say this ungrudgingly, for during those last two years my father and I seemed to become more closely united, and I know how deep was the affectionate intimacy at the time of his death.

The "last improvement"—in truth, the very last—was the building of a conservatory between the drawing and dining rooms. My father was more delighted with this than with any previous alteration, and it was certainly a pretty addition to the quaint old villa. The chalet, too, which he used in summer as his study, was another favourite spot at his favourite Gadshill.

In the early months of 1870 we moved up to London, as my father had decided to give twelve farewell readings there. He had the sanction of Sir Thomas Watson to this undertaking, on condition that there should be no railway journeys in connection with them. While we were in London he made many private engagements, principally, I know, on my account, as I was to be presented that spring.

During this last visit to London, my father was not, however, in his usual health, and was so quickly and easily tired that a great number of our engagements had to be cancelled. He dined out very seldom, and I remember that on the last occasion he attended a very large dinner party the effort was too much for him, and before the gentlemen returned to the drawing-room, he sent me a message begging me to come to him at once, saying that he was in too great pain to mount the stairs. No one who had watched him throughout the dinner, seeing his bright, animated face, and listening to his cheery conversation, could have imagined him to be suffering acute pain.

He was at Gadshill again by the thirtieth of May, and soon hard at work upon "Edwin Drood." Although happy and contented, there was an appearance of fatigue and weariness about him very unlike his usual air of fresh activity. He was out with the dogs for the last time on the afternoon of the sixth of June, when he walked into

Rochester. My sister, who had come to see the latest "improvement," was visiting us, and was to take me with her to London on her return, for a short visit. The conservatory—the "improvement" which Katie had been summoned to inspect—had been stocked, and by this time many of the plants were in full blossom. Everything was at its brightest and I remember distinctly my father's pleasure in showing my sister the beauties of his "improvement."

We had been having most lovely weather, and in consequence, the out-door plants were wonderfully forward in their bloom, my father's favourite red geraniums making a blaze of colour in the front garden. The syringa shrubs filled the evening air with sweetest fragrance as we sat in the porch and walked about the garden on this last Sunday of our dear father's life. My aunt and I retired early and my dear sister sat for a long while with my father while he spoke to her most earnestly of his affairs.

As I have already said my father had such an intense dislike for leave-taking that he always, when it was possible, shirked a farewell, and we children, knowing this dislike, used only to wave our hands or give him a silent kiss when parting. But on this Monday morning, the seventh, just as we were about to start for London, my sister suddenly said: "I *must* say good-bye to papa," and hurried over to the chalet where he was busily writing. As a rule when he was so occupied, my father would hold up his cheek to be kissed, but this day he took my sister in his arms, saying: "God bless you, Katie," and there, "among the branches of the trees, among the birds and butterflies and the scent of flowers," she left him, never to look into his eyes again.

In the afternoon, feeling fatigued, and not inclined to much walking, he drove with my aunt into Cobham. There he left the carriage and walked home through the park. After dinner he remained seated in the dining-room, through the evening, as from that room he could see the effect of some lighted Chinese lanterns, which he had hung in the conservatory during the day, and talked to my aunt about his great love for Gadshill, his wish that his name might become more associated with the place, and his desire to be buried near it.

On the morning of the eighth he was in excellent spirits.

speaking of his book, at which he intended working through the day, and in which he was most intensely interested. He spent a busy morning in the chalet, and it must have been then that he wrote that description of Rochester, which touched our hearts when we read it for the first time after its writer lay dead: "Brilliant morning shines on the old city. Its antiquities and ruins are surpassingly beautiful with the lusty ivy gleaming in the sun and the rich trees waving in the balmy air. Changes of glorious light from moving boughs, songs of birds, scents from gardens, woods and fields, or rather, from the one great garden of the whole cultivated island in its yielding time, penetrate into the cathedral, subdue its earthly odour, and preach the Resurrection and the Life."

He returned to the house for luncheon, seemingly perfectly well and exceedingly cheerful and hopeful. He smoked a cigar in his beloved conservatory, and went back to the chalet. When he came again to the house, about an hour before the time fixed for an early dinner, he was tired, silent and abstracted, but as this was a mood very usual to him after a day of engrossing work, it caused no alarm nor surprise to my aunt, who happened to be the only member of the family at home. While awaiting dinner he wrote some letters in the library and arranged some trifling business matters, with a view to his departure for London the following morning.

It was not until they were seated at the dinner-table that a striking change in the colour and expression of his face startled my aunt. Upon her asking him if he were ill, he answered, "Yes, very ill; I have been very ill for the last hour." But when she said that she would send for a physician he stopped her, saying that he would go on with dinner, and afterwards to London.

He made an earnest effort to struggle against the seizure which was fast coming over him, and continued to talk, but incoherently and very indistinctly. It being now evident that he was in a serious condition, my aunt begged him to go to his room before she sent for medical aid. "Come and lie down," she entreated. "Yes, on the ground," he answered indistinctly. These were the last words that he uttered. As he spoke, he fell to the floor. A couch was brought into the dining-room, on which he was laid, a messenger was dispatched for the local physi-

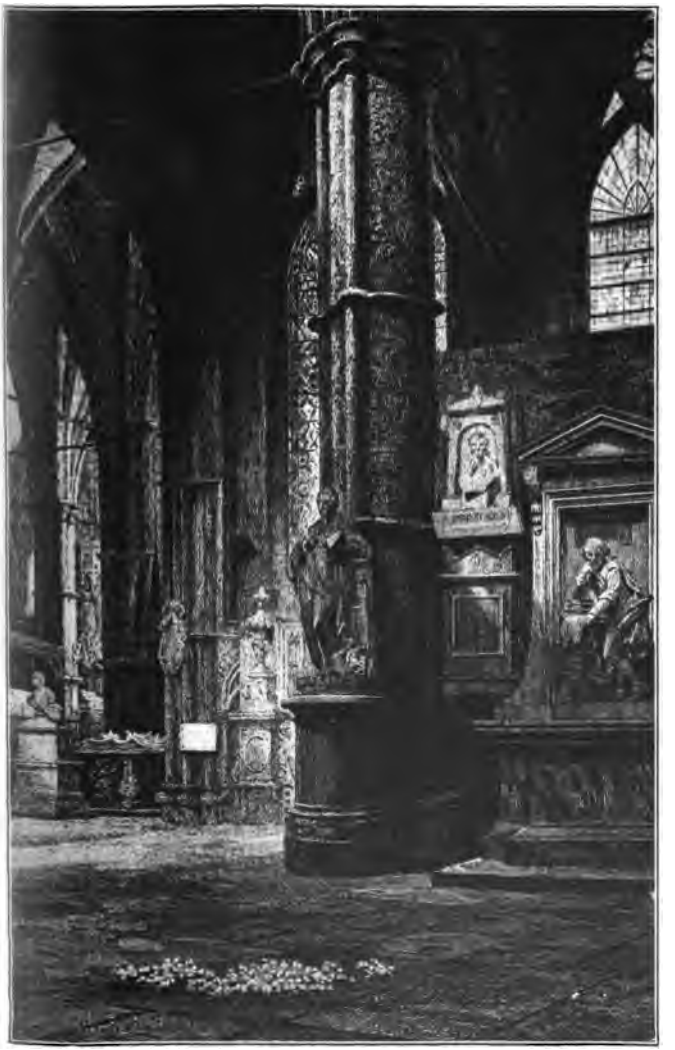
cian, telegrams were sent to all of us and to Mr. Beard. This was at a few minutes after six o'clock. I was dining at a house some little distance from my sister's home. Dinner was half over when I received a message that she wished to speak to me. I found her in the hall with a change of dress for me and a cab in waiting. Quickly I changed my gown, and we began the short journey which brought us to our sadly altered home. Our dear aunt was waiting for us at the open door, and when I saw her face I think the last faint hope died within me.

All through the night we watched him—my sister on one side of the couch, my aunt on the other, and I keeping hot bricks to the feet which nothing could warm, hoping and praying that he might open his eyes and look at us, and know us once again. But he never moved, never opened his eyes, never showed a sign of consciousness through all the long night. On the afternoon of the ninth the celebrated London physician Dr. Russell Reynolds was summoned to a consultation by the two medical men in attendance, but he could only confirm their hopeless verdict. Later, in the evening of this day, at ten minutes past six, we saw a shudder pass over our dear father, he heaved a deep sigh, a large tear rolled down his face and at that instant his spirit left us. As we saw the dark shadow pass from his face, leaving it so calm and beautiful in the peace and majesty of death, I think there was not one of us who would have wished, could we have had the power, to recall his spirit to earth.

I made it my duty to guard the beloved body as long as it was left to us. The room in which my dear father reposed for the last time was bright with the beautiful fresh flowers which were so abundant at this time of the year, and which our good neighbours sent to us so frequently. The birds were singing all about and the summer sun shone brilliantly.

And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.



S. L. Fildes. J. Saddler.

THE GRAVE.

Those exquisite lines of Lord Tennyson's seem so appropriate to my father, to his dread of good-byes, to his great and simple faith, that I have ventured to quote them here.

On the morning after he died, we received a very kind visit from Sir John Millais, then Mr. Millais, R. A., and Mr. Woolner, R. A. Sir John made a beautiful pencil drawing of my father, and Mr. Woolner took a cast of his head, from which he afterwards modelled a bust. The drawing belongs to my sister, and is one of her greatest treasures. It is, like all Sir John's drawings, most delicate and refined, and the likeness absolutely faithful to what my father looked in death.

You remember that when he was describing the illustrations of Little Nell's death-bed he wrote: "I want it to express the most beautiful repose and tranquillity, and to have something of a happy look, if death can." Surely this was what his death-bed expressed—infinite happiness and rest.

As my father had expressed a wish to be buried in the quiet little churchyard at Shorne, arrangements were made for the interment to take place there. This intention was, however, abandoned, in consequence of a request from the Dean and chapter of Rochester Cathedral that his bones might repose there. A grave was prepared and everything arranged when it was made known to us, through Dean Stanley, that there was a general and very earnest desire that he should find his last resting-place in Westminster Abbey. To such a tribute to our dear father's memory we could make no possible objection, although it was with great regret that we relinquished the plan to lay him in a spot so closely identified with his life and works.

The only stipulation which was made in connection with the burial at Westminster Abbey was that the clause in his will which read: "I emphatically direct that I be buried in an inexpensive, unostentatious and strictly private manner," should be strictly adhered to, as it was.

At midday on the fourteenth of June a few friends and ourselves saw our dear one laid to rest in the grand old cathedral. Our small group in that vast edifice seemed to make the beautiful words of our beautiful burial service even more than usually solemn and touching. Later in the day, and for many following days, hundreds of

mourners flocked to the open grave, and filled the deep vault with flowers. And even after it was closed Dean Stanley wrote: "There was a constant pressure to the spot and many flowers were strewn upon it by unknown hands, many tears shed from unknown eyes."

And every year on the ninth of June and on Christmas Day we find other flowers strewn by other unknown hands on that spot so sacred to us, as to all who knew and loved him. And every year beautiful bright-coloured leaves are sent to us from across the Atlantic, to be placed with our own flowers on that dear grave.

And for his epitaph what better than my father's own words:

"Of the loved, revered, and honoured head, thou canst not turn one hair to thy dread purposes, nor make one feature odious. It is not that the hand is heavy and will fall down when released; it is not that the heart and pulse are still; but that the hand was open, generous and true, the heart brave, warm and tender, and the pulse a man's. Strike! shadow, strike! and see his good deeds springing from the wound, to sow the world with life immortal."

DICKENS.

BY

ADOLPHUS WILLIAM WARD.*

CHAPTER V.

CHANGES.

1852—1858.

I HAVE spoken of both the intellectual and the physical vigour of Charles Dickens as at their height in the years of which the most enduring fruit was the most delightful of all his fictions ["David Copperfield"]. But there was no break in his activity after the achievement of this or any other of his literary successes, and he was never harder at work than during the seven years of which I am about to speak, although in this period also occasionally he was to be found hard at play. Its beginning saw him settled in his new and cheerfully-furnished abode at Tavistock House, of which he had taken possession in October, 1851. At its close he was master of the country residence which had been the dream of his childhood, but he had become a stranger to that tranquillity of mind without which no man's house is truly his home. Gradually, but surely, things had then, or a little before, come to such a pass that he wrote to his faithful friend: "I am become incapable of rest. I am quite confident I should rust, break and

* Chapters V.–VII. of Ward's "Dickens" are here given especially for their remarkable critical value, which the biographical details are skilfully made to subserve.—ED.

die, if I spared myself. Much better to die, doing. What I am in that way, nature made me first, and my way of life has of late, alas! confirmed." Early in 1852, the youngest of his children had been born to him—the boy whose babyhood once more revived in him a tenderness the depth of which no eccentric humours and fantastic *sobriquets* could conceal. In May, 1858, he had separated from the mother of his children, and though self-sacrificing affection was at hand to watch over them and him, yet that domestic life of which he had become the prophet and poet to hundreds of thousands was in its fairest and fullest form at an end for himself.

In 1852 the series of amateur performances in the country was completed; but time was found for a summer residence in Camden Crescent, Dover. During his stay there, and during most of his working hours in this and the following year—the spring of which was partly spent at Brighton—he was engaged upon his new story, "Bleak House," published in numbers dating from March, 1852, to September, 1853. "To let you into a secret," he had written to his lively friend, Miss Mary Boyle, from Dover, "I am not quite sure that I ever did like, or ever shall like anything quite so well as 'Copperfield.' But I foresee, I think, some very good things in 'Bleak House.'" There is no reason to believe that, by the general public, this novel was at the time of its publication a whit less favourably judged or less eagerly read than its predecessor. According to the author's own testimony, it "took extraordinarily, especially during the last five or six months" of its issue, and "retained its immense circulation from the first, beating dear old 'Copperfield' by a round ten thousand or more." To this day the book has its stanch friends, some of whom would perhaps be slow to confess by which of the elements in the story they are most forcibly attracted. On the other hand, "Bleak House" was probably the first of Dickens's works which furnished a suitable text to a class of censors whose precious balms have since descended upon his head with constant reiteration. The power of amusing being graciously conceded to the "man of genius," his book was charged with "absolute want of construction," and with being a heterogeneous compound made of a meagre and melodramatic story, and a number of "odd folks that have to do with a long

Chancery suit." Of the characters themselves it was asserted that, though in the main excessively funny, they were more like caricatures of the stage than studies from nature; some approval was bestowed upon particular figures, but rather as types of the influence of externals than as real individualities; and while the character of the poor crossing-sweeper was generously praised, it was regretted that Dickens should never have succeeded in drawing "a man or woman whose lot is cast among the high-born or wealthy." He belonged, unfortunately, "in literature to the same class as his illustrator, Hablot Browne, in design, though he far surpasses the illustrator in range and power." In other words, he was essentially a caricaturist.

As applied to "Bleak House," with which I am at present alone concerned, this kind of censure was in more ways than one unjust. So far as constructive skill was concerned, the praise given by Forster to "Bleak House" may be considered excessive; but there can be no doubt that, as compared, not with "Pickwick" and "Nickleby," but with its immediate predecessor, "David Copperfield," this novel exhibits a decided advance in that respect. In truth, Dickens in "Bleak House" for the first time emancipated himself from that form of novel which, in accordance with his great eighteenth-century favourites, he had hitherto more or less consciously adopted—the novel of adventure, of which the person of the hero, rather than the machinery of the plot, forms the connecting element. It may be that the influence of Wilkie Collins was already strong upon him, and that the younger writer, whom Dickens was about this time praising for his unlikeness to the "conceited idiots who suppose that volumes are to be tossed off like pancakes," was already teaching something to, as well as learning something from, the elder. It may also be that the criticism which as editor of "Household Words" Dickens was now in the habit of judiciously applying to the fictions of others, unconsciously affected his own methods and processes. Certain it is that from this point of view "Bleak House" may be said to begin a new series among his works of fiction. The great Chancery suit and the fortunes of those concerned in it are not a disconnected background from which the mystery of Lady Dedlock's secret stands forth in relief; but the

two main parts of the story are skillfully interwoven as in a Spanish double-plot. Nor is the success of the general action materially affected by the circumstance that the tone of Esther Summerson's diary is not altogether true. At the same time, there is indisputably some unevenness in the construction of "Bleak House." It drags, and drags very perceptibly, in some of its earlier parts. On the other hand, the interest of the reader is strongly revived, when that popular favourite, Mr. Inspector Bucket, appears on the scene, and when, more especially in the admirably vivid narrative of Esther's journey with the detective, the nearness of the catastrophe exercises its exciting influence. Some of the machinery, moreover—such as the Smallweed family's part in the plot—is tiresome; and particular incidents are intolerably horrible or absurd—such as, on the one hand, the spontaneous combustion (which is proved possible by the analogy of historical facts!), and on the other, the intrusion of the oil-grinding Mr. Chadband into the solemn presence of Sir Leicester Dedlock's grief. But in general the parts of the narrative are well knit together; and there is a subtle skill in the way in which the two main parts of the story converge towards their common close.

The idea of making an impersonal object like a great Chancery suit the centre round which a large and manifold group of characters revolves, seems to savour of a drama rather than of a story. No doubt the theme suggested itself to Dickens with a very real purpose, and on the basis of facts which he might well think warranted him in his treatment of it; for, true artist though he was, the thought of exposing some national defect, of helping to bring about some real reform, was always paramount in his mind over any mere literary conception. *Prima facie*, at least, and with all due deference to Chancery judges and eminent silk gowns like Mr. Blowers, the length of Chancery suits was a real public grievance, as well as a frequent private calamity. But even as a mere artistic notion, the idea of Jarndyce *v.* Jarndyce as diversely affecting those who lived by it, those who rebelled against it, those who died of it, was in its way of unique force; and while Dickens never brought to any other of his subjects so useful a knowledge of its external details—in times gone by he had served a "Kenge and Carboys" of his own

—hardly any one of those subjects suggested so wide a variety of aspects for characteristic treatment.

For never before had his versatility in drawing character filled his canvas with so multitudinous and so various a host of personages. The legal profession, with its servitors and hangers-on of every degree, occupies the centre of the picture. In this group no figure is more deserving of admiration than that of Mr. Tulkinghorn, the eminently respectable family solicitor at whose very funeral, by a four-wheeled affliction, the goodwill of the aristocracy manifests itself. We learn very little about him, and probably care less; but he interests us precisely as we should be interested by the real old family lawyer, about whom we might know and care equally little, were we to find him alone in the twilight, drinking his ancient port in his frescoed chamber in those fields where the shepherds play on Chancery pipes that have no stop. (Mr. Forster, by the way, omitted to point out to his readers, what the piety of American research has since put on record, that Mr. Tulkinghorn's house was a picture of the biographer's own residence.) The portrait of Mr. Vholes, who supports an unassailable but unenviable professional reputation for the sake of "the three dear girls at home," and a father whom he has to support "in the Vale of Taunton," is less attractive; but nothing could be more in its place in the story than the clammy tenacity of this legal ghoul and his "dead glove." Lower down in the great system of the law, we come upon Mr. Guppy and his fellows, the very quintessence of cockney vulgarity, seasoned with a flavour of legal sharpness without which the rankness of the mixture would be incomplete. To the legal group Miss Flite, whose original, if I remember right, used to haunt the Temple as well as the precincts of the Chancery courts, may likewise be said to belong. She is quite legitimately introduced into the story—which cannot be said of all Dickens's madmen—because her madness associates itself with its main theme.

Much admiration has been bestowed upon the figures of an eccentric by- or under-plot in this story, in which the family of the Jellybys and the august Mr. Turveydrop are, actively, or by passive endurance, engaged. The philanthropic section of *le monde où l'on s'ennuie* has never been satirised more tellingly, and, it must be added,

more bitterly. Perhaps at the time of the publication of "Bleak House" the activity of our Mrs. Jellybys took a wider and more cosmopolitan sweep than in later days; for we read at the end of Esther's diary how Mrs. Jellyby "has been disappointed in Borrioboola-Gha, which turned out a failure in consequence of the King of Borrioboola wanting to sell everybody—who survived the climate—for Rum; but she has taken up with the rights of women to sit in Parliament, and Caddy tells me it is a mission involving more correspondence than the old one." But Mrs. Jellyby's interference in the affairs of other people is, after all, hurtful only because in busying herself with theirs she forgets her own. The truly offensive benefactress of her fellow-creatures is Mrs. Pardiggle, who, maxim in mouth and tract in hand, turns everything she approaches to stone. Among her victims are her own children, including Alfred, aged five, who has been induced to take an oath "never to use tobacco in any form."

The particular vein of feeling that led Dickens to the delineation of these satirical figures was one which never ran dry with him, and which suggested some forcible-feeble satire in his very last fiction. I call it a vein of feeling only; for he could hardly have argued in cold blood that the efforts which he ridicules were not misrepresented as a whole by his satire. When poor Jo on his deathbed is "asked whether he ever knew a prayer," and replies that he could never make anything out of those spoken by the gentlemen who "came down Tom-all-Alone's a-prayin'," but who "mostly sed as the t'other wuns prayed wrong," the author brings a charge which he might not have found it easy to substantiate. Yet—with the exception of such isolated passages—the figure of Jo is in truth one of the most powerful protests that have been put forward on behalf of the friendless outcasts of our streets. Nor did the romantic element in the conception interfere with the effect of the realistic. If Jo, who seems at first to have been intended to be one of the main figures of the story, is in Dickens's best pathetic manner, the Bagnet family is in his happiest vein of quiet humour. Mr. Inspector Bucket, though not altogether free from mannerism, well deserves the popularity which he obtained. For this character, as the pages of "Household Words" testify, Dickens had made many studies in

real life. The detective police-officer had at that time not yet become a standing figure of fiction and the drama, nor had the detective of real life begun to destroy the illusion.

"Bleak House" was least of all among the novels hitherto published by its author obnoxious to the charge persistently brought against him, that he was doomed to failure in his attempts to draw characters taken from any but the lower spheres of life—in his attempts, in short, to draw ladies and gentlemen. To begin with, one of the most interesting characters in the book—indeed, in its relation to the main idea of the story, the most interesting of all—is the youthful hero, if he is to be so called, Richard Carson. From the very nature of the conception, the character is passive only; but the art and feeling are in their way unsurpassed with which the gradual collapse of a fine nature is here exhibited. Sir Leicester Dedlock, in some measure intended as a type of his class, has been condemned as wooden and unnatural; and no doubt the machinery of that part of the story in which he is concerned creaks before it gets under way. On the other hand, after the catastrophe has overwhelmed him and his house, he becomes a really fine picture, unmarred by any Grandisonianisms in either thought or phrase, of a true gentleman, bowed but not warped by distress. Sir Leicester's relatives, both dead and living; Volumnia's sprightly ancestress on the wall, and that "fair Dedlock" herself; the whole cousinhood, debilitated and otherwise, but of one mind on such points as William Buffy's blameworthy neglect of his duty *when in office*; all these make up a very probable picture of a house great enough—or thinking itself great enough—to look at the affairs of the world from the family point of view. In Lady Dedlock alone a failure must be admitted; but she, with her wicked double, the uncanny French maid Hortense, exists only for the sake of the plot.

With all its merits, "Bleak House" has little of that charm which belongs to so many of Dickens's earlier stories, and to "David Copperfield" above all. In part at least, this may be due to the excessive severity of the task which Dickens had set himself in "Bleak House"; for hardly any other of his works is constructed on so large a scale, or contains so many characters organically con-

nected with the progress of its plot; and in part, again, to the half-didactic, half-satirical purport of the story, which weighs heavily on the writer. An overstrained tone announces itself on the very first page; an opening full of power—indeed, of genius; but pitched in a key which we feel at once will not, without effort, be maintained. On the second page the prose has actually become verse; or how else can one describe part of the following apostrophe?

"This is the Court of Chancery, which has its decaying houses and its blighted lands in every shire; which has its worn-out lunatic in every madhouse, and its dead in every churchyard; which has its ruined suitor with his slipshod heels and threadbare dress, borrowing and begging through the round of every man's acquaintance; which gives to monied might the means abundantly of wearing out the right; which so exhausts finances, patience, courage, hope; so overthrows the brain and breaks the heart, that there is not an honourable man among its practitioners who would not give—who does not often give—the warning, 'Suffer any wrong that can be done you, rather than come here!'"

It was possibly with some thought of giving to "Bleak House" also, though in a different way, the close relation to his experiences of living men to which "David Copperfield" had owed so much, that Dickens introduced into it two *portraits*. Doubtless, at first, his intention had by no means gone so far as this. His constant counsellor always disliked his mixing up in his fictitious characters any personal reminiscences of particular men, experience having shown that in such cases the whole character came out *more like* than the author was aware. Nor can Dickens himself have failed to understand how such an experiment is always tempting, and always dangerous, how it is often irreconcilable with good feeling, and quite as often with good taste. In "Bleak House," however, it occurred to him to introduce likenesses of two living men, both more or less well known to the public and to himself; and both of individualities too clearly marked for a portrait, or even a caricature, of either to be easily mistaken. Of that art of mystification which the authors of both English and French *romans à clef* have since practised with so much transient success, he was no master, and fortunately so: for what could be more ridiculous than that the reader's interest in a character should be stimu-

lated, first, by its being evidently the late Lord P–lm–rst–n, or the P—— of O——, and then by its being no less evidently somebody else? It should be added that neither of the two portrait characters in "Bleak House" possesses the least importance for the conduct of the story, so that there is nothing to justify their introduction except whatever excellence may belong to them in themselves.

Lawrence Boythorn is described by Mr. Sydney Colvin as drawn from Walter Savage Landor with his intellectual greatness left out. It was, of course, unlikely that his intellectual greatness should be left in, the intention obviously being to reproduce what was eccentric in the ways and manner, with a suggestion of what was noble in the character, of Dickens's famous friend. Whether, had he attempted to do so, Dickens could have drawn a picture of the whole Landor, is another question. Landor, who could put into a classic dialogue that sense of the *naïf* to which Dickens is generally a stranger, yet passionately admired the most *sentimental* of all his young friend's poetic figures; and it might almost be said that the intellectual natures of the two men were drawn together by the force of contrast. They appear to have first become intimate with one another during Landor's residence at Bath—which began in 1837—and they frequently met at Gore House. At a celebration of the poet's birthday in his lodgings at Bath, so Forster tells us in his biography of Landor, "the fancy which took the form of Little Nell in the 'Curiosity Shop' first dawned on the genius of its creator." In Landor's spacious mind there was room for cordial admiration of an author, the bent of whose genius differed widely from that of his own; and he could thus afford to sympathise with his whole heart in a creation which men of much smaller intellectual build have pronounced mawkish and unreal. Dickens afterwards gave to one of his sons the names of Walter Landor; and when the old man died at last, *after* his godson, paid him an eloquent tribute of respect in "All the Year Round." In this paper the personal intention of the character of Boythorn is avowed by implication; but though Landor esteemed and loved Dickens, it might seem matter for wonder, did not eccentrics, after all, sometimes cherish their own eccentricity, that his irascible nature failed to resent a rather doubtful compliment. For the character of

Boythorn is whimsical rather than, in any but the earlier sense of the word, humorous. But the portrait, however imperfect, was in this instance, beyond all doubt, both kindly meant and kindly taken; though it cannot be said to have added to the attractions of the book into which it is introduced.

While no doubt ever existed as to this likeness, the case may not seem so clear with regard to the original of Harold Skimpole. It would be far more pleasant to pass by without notice the controversy—if controversy it can be called—which this character provoked; but a wrong done by one eminent man of letters to another, however unforeseen its extent may have been, and however genuine the endeavour to repair its effect, becomes part of literary history. That the original of Harold Skimpole was Leigh Hunt cannot reasonably be called into question. This assertion by no means precludes the possibility, or probability, that a second original suggested certain features in the portrait. Nor does it contradict the substantial truthfulness of Dickens's own statement, published in "All the Year Round" after Leigh Hunt's death, on the appearance of the new edition of the "Autobiography" with Thornton Hunt's admirable introduction. While Dickens then wrote, "he yielded to the temptation of too often making the character speak like his old friend," yet "he no more thought, God fogive him! that the admired original would ever be charged with the imaginary vices of the fictitious creature, than he had himself ever thought of charging the blood of Desdemona and Othello on the innocent Academy model who sat for Iago's leg in the picture. Even as to the mere occasional manner," he declared that he had "altered the whole of that part of the text, when two intimate friends of Leigh Hunt—both still living—discovered too strong a resemblance to his 'way.'" But, while accepting this statement, and suppressing a regret that after discovering the dangerous closeness of the resemblance Dickens should have, quite at the end of the story, introduced a satirical reference to Harold Skimpole's autobiography—Leigh Hunt's having been published only a year or two before—one must confess that the explanation only helps to prove the rashness of the offence. While intending the portrait to keep its own secret from the general public, Dickens at the same

time must have wished to gratify a few keen-sighted friends. In March, 1852, he writes to Forster, evidently in reference to the apprehensions of his correspondent: "Browne has done Skimpole, and helped to make him singularly unlike the great original." The "great original" was a man for whom, both before and after this untoward incident in the relations between them, Dickens professed a warm regard, and who, to judge from the testimony of those who knew him well, and from his unaffected narrative of his own life, abundantly deserved it. A perusal of Leigh Hunt's "Autobiography" suffices to show that he used to talk in Skimpole's manner, and even to write in it; that he was at one period of his life altogether ignorant of money matters, and that he cultivated cheerfulness on principle. But it likewise shows that his ignorance of business was acknowledged by him as a misfortune in which he was very far from exulting. "Do I boast of this ignorance?" he writes. "Alas! I have no such respect for the pedantry of absurdity as that. I blush for it, and I only record it out of a sheer painful movement of conscience, as a warning to those young authors who might be led to look upon such folly as a fine thing, which at all events is what I never thought it myself." On the other hand, as his son showed, his cheerfulness, which was not inconsistent with a natural proneness to intervals of melancholy, rested on grounds which were the result of a fine as well as healthy morality. "The value of cheerful opinions," he wrote, in words embodying a moral that Dickens himself was never weary of enforcing, "is inestimable; they will retain a sort of heaven round a man, when everything else might fail him, and consequently they ought to be religiously inculcated upon his children." At the same time, no quality was more conspicuous in his life than his readiness for hard work, even under the most depressing circumstances; and no feature was more marked in his moral character than his conscientiousness. "In the midst of the sorest temptations," Dickens wrote of him, "he maintained his honesty unblemished by a single stain; and in all public and private transactions he was the very soul of truth and honour." To mix up with the outward traits of such a man the detestable obliquities of Harold Skimpole was an experiment paradoxical even as a mere piece of character-drawing.

The merely literary result is a failure, while a wound was needlessly inflicted, if not upon Leigh Hunt himself, at least upon all who cherished his friendship or good name. Dickens seems honestly and deeply to have regretted what he had done, and the extremely tasteful little tribute to Leigh Hunt's poetic gifts, which, some years before the death of the latter, [was published in] "Household Words," * must have partaken of the nature of an *amende honorable*. Neither his subsequent repudiation of unfriendly intentions, nor his earlier exertions on Leigh Hunt's behalf, are to be overlooked, but they cannot undo a mistake which forms an unfortunate incident in Dickens's literary life, singularly free though that life as a whole is from the miseries of personal quarrels, and all the pettinesses with which the world of letters is too familiar.

While Dickens was engaged upon a literary work such as would have absorbed the intellectual energies of most men, he not only wrote occasionally for his journal, but also dictated for publication in it the successive portions of a book altogether outside his usual range of authorship. This was "A Child's History of England," the only one of his works that was not written by his own hand. A history of England, written by Charles Dickens for his own or any one else's children, was sure to be a different work from one written under similar circumstances by Mr. Freeman or the late M. Guizot. The book, though it cannot be called a success, is, however, by no means devoid of interest. Just ten years earlier he had written, and printed, a history of England for the benefit of his eldest son, then a hopeful student of the age of five, which was composed, as he informed Douglas Jerrold at the time, "in the exact spirit" of that advanced politician's paper, "for I don't know what I should do if he were to get hold of any Conservative or High Church notions; and the best way of guarding against any such horrible result is, I take it, to wring the parrots' necks in his very cradle." The "Child's History of England" is written in the same spirit, and illustrates more directly, and, it must be added, more coarsely than any of Dickens's other works, his hatred of ecclesiasticism of all kinds. Thus, the account of Dunstan is pervaded by a prejudice which is the fruit of anything but knowledge; Edward

* "By Rail to Parnassus," June 16th, 1855: by Henry Morley.—Ed.

the Confessor is "the dreary old" and "the maudlin Confessor"; and the Pope and what belongs to him are treated with a measure of contumely which would have satisfied the heart of Leigh Hunt himself. To be sure, if King John is dismissed as a "miserable brute," King Henry the Eighth is not more courteously designated as a "blot of blood and grease upon the history of England." On the other hand, it could hardly be but that certain passages of the national story should be well told by so great a master of narrative; and though the strain in which parts of the history of Charles the Second are recounted strikes one as hardly suitable to the young, to whom irony is in general *caviare* indeed, yet there are touches both in the story of "this merry gentleman"—a designation which almost recalls Fagin—and elsewhere in the book not unworthy of its author. Its patriotic spirit is quite as striking as its radicalism; and vulgar as some of its expressions must be called, there is a pleasing glow in the passage on King Alfred, which declares the "English-Saxon" character to have been "the greatest character among the nations of the earth"; and there is a yet nobler enthusiasm, such as it would, indeed, be worth any writer's while to infuse into the young, in the passionate earnestness with which, by means of the story of Agincourt, the truth is enforced that "nothing can make war otherwise than horrible."

This book must have been dictated, and some at least of the latter portion of "Bleak House" written, at Boulogne, where, after a spring sojourn at Brighton, Dickens spent the summer of 1853, and where were also passed the summers of 1854 and 1856. Boulogne, where Le Sage's last years were spent, was "Our French Watering-place," so graphically described in a paper in "Household Words" as a companion picture to the old familiar Broadstairs. The family were comfortably settled on a green hillside close to the town, "in a charming garden in a very pleasant country," with "excellent light wines on the premises, French cookery, millions of roses, two cows—for milk-punch—vegetables cut for the pot, and handed in at the kitchen window; five summer-houses, fifteen fountains—with no water in 'em—and thirty-seven clocks—keeping, as I conceive, Australian time, having no reference whatever to the hours on this side of the globe."

The energetic owner of the Villa des Moulineaux was the "M. Loyal Devasseur" of "Our French Watering-place" —jovial, convivial, genial, sentimental, too, as a Bonapartist and a patriot. In 1854 the same obliging personage housed the Dickens family in another abode at the top of the hill, close to the famous Napoleonic column; but in 1856 they came back to the Moulineaux. The former year had been an exciting one for Englishmen in France, with royal visits to and fro to testify to the *entente cordiale* between the governments. Dickens, notwithstanding his humorous assertions, was only moderately touched by the Sebastopol fever; but when a concrete problem came before him in the shape of a festive demonstration, he addressed himself to it with the irrepressible ardour of the born stage-manager. "In our own proper illumination," he writes on the occasion of the Prince Consort's visit to the camp at Boulogne, "I laid on all the servants, all the children now at home, all the visitors, one to every window, with everything ready to light up on the ringing of a big dinner-bell by your humble correspondent. St. Peter's on Easter Monday was the result."

Of course, at Boulogne, Dickens was cut off neither from his business nor from his private friends. His hospitable invitations were as urgent to his French villa in the summer as to his London house in the winter, and on both sides of the water the "Household Words" familiars were as sure of a welcome from their chief. During his absences from London he could have had no trustier lieutenant than W. H. Wills, with whom, being always ready to throw himself into a part, he corresponded in an amusing paragraphed semi-official style. And neither in his working nor in his leisure hours had he by this time any more cherished companion than Wilkie Collins, whose progress towards brilliant success he was watching with the keenest and kindliest interest. With him and his old friend Augustus Egg, Dickens, in October, 1853, started on a tour to Switzerland and Italy, in the course of which he saw more than one old friend, and revisited more than one known scene—ascending Vesuvius with Mr. Layard and drinking punch at Rome with David Roberts. It would be absurd to make any lofty demands upon the brief records of a holiday journey; and, for my part, I would rather think of Dickens assiduous over his Christ-

mas number at Rome and at Venice, than weigh his moralisings about the electric telegraph running through the Coliseum. His letters written to his wife during this trip are bright and gay, and it was certainly no roving bachelor who "kissed almost all the children he encountered in remembrance of the sweet faces" of his own, and "talked to all the mothers who carried them." By the middle of December the travellers were home again, and before the year was out he had read to large audiences at Birmingham, on behalf of a public institution, his favourite Christmas stories of the "Christmas Carol" and "The Cricket on the Hearth." As yet, however, his mind was not seriously intent upon any labours but those proper to his career as an author, and the year 1854 saw, between the months of April and August, the publication in his journal of a new story, which is among the most characteristic, though not among the most successful, of his works of fiction.

In comparison with most of Dickens's novels, "Hard Times" is contained within a narrow compass; and this with the further necessity of securing to each successive small portion of the story a certain immediate degree of effectiveness, accounts, in some measure, for the peculiarity of the impression left by this story upon many of its readers. Short as the story relatively is, few of Dickens's fictions were elaborated with so much care. He had not intended to write a new story for a twelvemonth, when, as he says, "the idea laid hold of him by the throat in a very violent manner," and the labour, carried on under conditions of peculiar irksomeness, "used him up," after a quite unaccustomed fashion. The book thus acquired a precision of form and manner which commends it to the French school of criticism rather than to lovers of English humour in its ampler forms and more flowing moods. At the same time, the work has its purpose so visibly imprinted on its front, as almost to forbid our regarding it in the first instance apart from the moral which avowedly it is intended to inculcate. This moral, by no means new with Dickens, has both a negative and a positive side. "Do not harden your hearts," is the negative injunction, more especially do not harden them against the promptings of that human kindness which should draw together man and man, old and young, rich and poor;

and keep your sympathies fresh by bringing nourishment to them through channels which prejudice or short-sightedness would fain narrow or stop up. This hortatory purpose assumes the form of invective and even of angry menace; and "utilitarian economists, skeletons of schoolmasters, commissioners of fact, genteel and used-up infidels, gabblers of many little dog's-eared creeds" are warned: "The poor you have always with you. Cultivate in them, while there is yet time, the utmost graces of the fancies and affections, to adorn their lives, so much in need of ornament; or, in the day of your triumph, when romance is utterly driven out of their souls, and they and a bare existence stand face to face, reality will take a wolfish turn, and make an end of you."

No authority, however eminent, not even Ruskin's, is required to teach reflecting minds the infinite importance of the principles which "Hard Times" was intended to illustrate. Nor is it of much moment whether the illustrations are always exact; whether the "Commissioners of Facts" have reason to protest that the unimaginative character of their processes does not necessarily imply an unimaginative purpose in their ends; whether there is any actual Coketown in existence within a hundred miles of Manchester; or whether it suffices that "everybody knew what was meant, but every cotton-spinning town said it was the other cotton-spinning town." The chief personal grievance of Stephen Blackpool has been removed or abated, but the "muddle" is not yet altogether cleared up which prevents the nation and the "national dustmen," its lawgivers, from impartially and sympathetically furthering the interest of all classes. In a word, the moral of "Hard Times" has not yet lost its force, however imperfect or unfair the method may have been in which it is urged in the book.

Unfortunately, however, a work of art with a didactic purpose is only too often prone to exaggerate what seems of special importance for the purpose in question, and to heighten contrasts which seem likely to put it in the clearest light. "Thomas Gradgrind, sir," who announces himself with something of the genuine Lancashire roll, and his system are a sound and a laughable piece of satire to begin with, only here and there marred by the satirist's imperfect knowledge of the details which he caricatures.

The "Manchester School," which the novel strives to expose, is in itself to a great extent a figment of the imagination, which to this day serves to round many a hollow period in oratory and journalism. Who, it may fairly be asked, were the parliamentary politicians satirised in the member for Coketown, deaf and blind to any consideration but the multiplication table. But in any case the cause hardly warrants one of its consequences as depicted in the novel—the utter brutalisation of a stolid nature like "the Whelp's." When Gradgrind's son is about to be shipped abroad out of reach of the penalties of his crime, he reminds his father that he merely exemplifies the statistical law that "so many people out of so many will be dishonest." When the virtuous Bitzer is indignantly asked whether he has a heart, he replies that he is physiologically assured of the fact; and to the further inquiry whether this heart of his is accessible to compassion, makes answer that "it is accessible to reason, and to nothing else." These returnings of Mr. Gradgrind's philosophy upon himself savour of the moral justice represented by Gratiano in the fourth act [of "The Merchant of Venice"]. So again, Coketown with its tall chimneys and black river, and its thirteen religious denominations, to which whoever else belonged the working men did *not*, is no perverse contradiction of fact. But the influence of Coketown, or of a whole wilderness of Coketowns, cannot justly be charged with a tendency to ripen such a product as Josiah Bounderby, who is not only the "bully of humanity," but proves to be a mean-spirited impostor in his pretensions to the glory of self-help. In short, "Hard Times" errs by its attempt to prove too much.

Apart, however, from the didactic purposes which overburden it, the pathos and humour of particular portions of this tale appear to me to have been in nowise overrated. The domestic tragedy of Stephen and Rachael has a subdued intensity of tenderness and melancholy of a kind rare with Dickens, upon whom the example of Mrs. Gaskell in this instance may not have been without its influence. Nor is there anything more delicately and at the same time more appropriately conceived in any of his works, than poor Rachael's dominion over the imagination as well as over the affections of her noble-minded

and unfortunate lover: "as the shining stars were to the heavy candle in the window, so was Rachael, in the rugged fancy of this man, to the common experiences of his life." The love-story of poor Louisa is of a different kind, and more wordy in the telling; yet here also the feelings painted are natural and true. The humorous interest is almost entirely concentrated upon the company of horse-riders; and never has Dickens's extraordinary power of humorous observation more genially asserted itself. From Mr. Sleary—"thtout man, game-eye"—and his protagonist, Mr. E. W. B. Childers, who, when he shook his long hair, caused it to "shake all at once," down to Master Kidderminster, who used to form the apex of the human pyramids, and "in whose young nature there was an original flavour of the misanthrope," these honest equestrians are more than worthy to stand by the side of Mr. Vincent Crummles and his company of actors; and the fun has here, in addition to the grotesqueness of the earlier picture, a mellowness of its own. Dickens's comic genius was never so much at its ease and so inexhaustible in ludicrous fancies, as in the depiction of such groups as this; and the horse-riders, skilfully introduced to illustrate a truth, wholesome if not novel, would have insured popularity to a far less interesting, and to a far less powerful fiction.

The year after that which saw the publication of "Hard Times" was one in which the thoughts of most Englishmen were turned away from the problems approached in that story. But if the military glories of 1854 had not aroused in him any very exuberant enthusiasm, the reports from the Crimea in the ensuing winter were more likely to appeal to his patriotism as well as to his innate impatience of disorder and incompetence. In the first instance, however, he contented himself with those grumblings to which, as a sworn foe of red tape and a declared disbeliever in our Parliamentary system, he might claim to have a special right; and he seems to have been too restless in and about himself to have entered very closely into the progress of public affairs. The Christmas had been a merry one at Tavistock House; and the amateur theatricals of its juvenile company had passed through a most successful season. Their history has been written by one of the performers—himself not the least distinguished of the

company, since it was he who, in Dickens's house, caused Thackeray to roll off his seat in a fit of laughter. Dickens, who with Mark Lemon disported himself among these precocious minnows, was, as our chronicler relates, like Triplet, "author, manager, and actor too," organiser, deviser, and harmoniser of all the incongruous assembled elements; it was he "who improvised costumes, painted and corked our innocent cheeks, and suggested all the most effective business of the scene." But as was usual with him, the transition was rapid from play to something very like earnest; and already in June, 1855, the Tavistock House theatre produced Wilkie Collins's melodrama of "The Lighthouse," which afterwards found its way to the public stage. To Dickens, who performed in it with the author, it afforded "scope for a piece of acting of great power," the old sailor Aaron Gurnock, which by its savage picturesqueness earned a tribute of recognition from Carlyle. No less a hand than Stanfield painted the scenery, and Dickens himself, besides writing the prologue, introduced into the piece a ballad called "The Story of the Wreck," a not unsuccessful effort in Cowper's manner. At Christmas, 1856–57, there followed "The Frozen Deep," another melodrama by the same author; and by this time the management of his private theatricals had become to Dickens a serious business to be carried on seriously for its own sake. "It was to him," he wrote, "like writing a book in company"; and his young people might learn from it "that kind of humility which is got from the earned knowledge that whatever the right hand finds to do must be done with the heart in it, and in a desperate earnest." "The Frozen Deep" was several times repeated, on one occasion for the benefit of the daughter of the recently deceased Douglas Jerrold; but by the end of January the little theatre was finally broken up; and though Dickens spent one more winter season at Tavistock House, the shadow was then already falling upon his cheerful home.

In the midst of his children's Christmas gaieties of the year 1855, Dickens had given two or three public readings to "wonderful audiences" in various parts of the country. A trip to Paris with Wilkie Collins had followed, during which, as he wrote home, he was wandering about Paris all day, dining at all manner of places, and frequenting

the theatres at the rate of two or three a night. "I suppose," he adds, with pleasant self-irony, "as an old farmer said of Scott, I am 'makin' mysel'' all the time; but I seem to be rather a free-and-easy sort of superior vagabond." And in truth a roving restless spirit was strong upon him in these years. Already, in April, he speaks of himself as "going off; I don't know where or how far, to ponder about I don't know what." France, Switzerland, Spain, Constantinople, in Mr. Layard's company had been successively in his thoughts, and for aught he knew, Greenland and the North Pole might occur to him next. At the same time he foresaw that the end of it all would be his shutting himself up in some out-of-the-way place of which he had not yet thought, and going desperately to work there.

Before, however, these phantasmagoric schemes had subsided into the quiet plan of an autumn visit to Folkestone, followed during the winter and spring by a residence at Paris, he had at least found a subject to ponder on, which was to suggest an altogether novel element in his next work of fiction. I have said that though like the majority of his fellow-countrymen, Dickens regarded our war with Russia as inevitable, yet his hatred of all war, and his impatience of the exaggerations of passion and sentiment which all war produces, had preserved him from himself falling a victim to their contagion. On the other hand, when in the winter of 1854–55 the note of exultation in the bravery of our soldiers in the Crimea began to be intermingled with complaints against the grievously defective arrangements for their comfort and health, and when these complaints, stimulated by the loud-voiced energy of the press, and extending into censures upon the whole antiquated and perverse system of our army administration, speedily swelled into a roar of popular indignation, sincere conviction ranged him on the side of the most uncompromising malcontents. He was at all times ready to give vent to that antipathy against officialism which is shared by so large a number of Englishmen. Though the son of a dockyard official, he is found roundly asserting that "more obstruction of good things and patronage of bad things has been committed in the dockyards—as in everything connected with the mis-direction of the navy—than in every other branch of the

public service put together, including"—the particularisation is hard—"even the Woods and Forests." He had listened, we may be sure, to the scornful denunciations launched by the prophet of the "Latter-Day Pamphlets" against Downing Street and all its works, and to the proclamation of the great though rather vague truth that "reform in that Downing Street department of affairs is precisely the reform which were worth all others." And now the heartrending sufferings of multitudes of brave men had brought to light, in one department of the public administration, a series of complications and perversities which in the end became so patent to the Government itself, that they had to be roughly remedied in the very midst of the struggle. The cry for administrative reform, which arose in the year 1855, however crude the form it frequently took, was in itself a logical enough result of the situation; and there is no doubt that the angriness of the complaint was intensified by the attitude taken up in the House of Commons by the head of the Government towards the pertinacious politician who made himself the mouthpiece of the extreme demands of the feeling outside. Mr. Layard was Dickens's valued friend; and the share is thus easily explained, which—against his otherwise uniform practice of abstaining from public meetings—the most popular writer of the day took in the Administrative Reform meetings, held in Drury Lane Theatre, on June 27th, 1855. The speech which he delivered on this occasion, and which was intended to aid in forcing the "whole question" of Administrative Reform upon the attention of an unwilling Government, possesses no value whatever in connection with its theme, though of course it is not devoid of some smart and telling hits. Not on the platform, but at his desk as an author, was Dickens to do real service to the cause of administrative efficiency. For while invective of a general kind runs off like water from the rock of usage, even Circumlocution Offices are not insensible to the acetous force of satire.

Dickens's caricature of British officialism formed the most generally attractive element in the story of "Little Dorrit"—originally intended to be called "Nobody's Fault"—which he published in monthly numbers, from December, 1855, to June, 1857. He was solemnly taken to task for his audacity by the "Edinburgh Review," which

reproached him for his persistent ridicule of "the institutions of the country, the laws, the administration, in a word, the government under which we live." His "charges" were treated as hardly seriously meant, but as worthy of severe reprobation because likely to be seriously taken by the poor, the uneducated, and the young. And the caricaturist, besides being reminded of the names of several eminent public servants, was specially requested to look, as upon a picture contrasting with his imaginary Circumlocution Office, upon the Post Office, or, for the choice offered was not more extensive, upon the London police so liberally praised by himself in his own journal. The delighted author of "Little Dorrit" replied to this not very skilful diatribe in a short and spirited rejoinder in "Household Words." In this he judiciously confined himself to refuting an unfounded incidental accusation in the Edinburgh article, and to dwelling, as upon a "Curious Misprint," upon the indignant query: "How does he account for the career of *Mr. Rowland Hill?*" whose name, as an example of the ready intelligence of the Circumlocution Office, was certainly an odd *erratum.* Had he, however, cared to make a more general reply to the main article of the indictment, he might have pointed out that, as a matter of fact, our official administrative machinery *had* recently broken down in one of its most important branches, and that circumlocution in the literal sense of the word—circumlocution between department and department, or office and office—had been one of the principal causes of the collapse. The general drift of the satire was, therefore, in accordance with fact, and the satire itself salutary in its character. To quarrel with it for not taking into consideration what might be said on the other side, was to quarrel with the method of treatment which satire has at all times considered itself entitled to adopt; while to stigmatise a popular book as likely to mislead the ill-informed, was to suggest a restraint which would have deprived wit and humour of most of their opportunities of rendering service to either a good or an evil cause.

A far more legitimate exception has been taken to these Circumlocution Office episodes as defective in art by the very reason of their being exaggerations. Those best

acquainted with the interiors of our government offices may be right in denying that the Barnacles can be regarded as an existing type. Indeed, it would at no time have been easy to point to any office quite as labyrinthine, or quite as bottomless, as that permanently presided over by Mr. Tite Barnacle; to any chief secretary or commissioner so absolutely wooden of fibre as he; or to any private secretary so completely absorbed in his eyeglass as Barnacle junior. But as satirical figures they one and all fulfil their purpose, as thoroughly as the picture of the official sanctum itself with its furniture "in the higher official manner," and its "general bamboozling air of how not to do it." The only question is, whether satire which, if it is to be effective, must be of a piece and in its way exaggerated, is not out of place in a pathetic and humorous fiction, where, like a patch of too diverse a thread, it interferes with the texture into which it is introduced. In themselves these passages of "Little Dorrit" deserve to remain unforgotten among the masterpieces of literary caricature; and there is, I do not hesitate to say, something of Swiftian force in their grotesque embodiment of a popular current of indignation. The mere name of the Circumlocution Office was a stroke of genius, one of those phrases of Dickens which Professor Masson justly describes as, whether exaggerated or not, "efficacious for social reform." As usual, Dickens had made himself well acquainted with the formal or outside part of his subject; the very air of Whitehall seems to gather round us as Mr. Tite Barnacle, in answer to a persistent inquirer who "wants to know" the position of a particular matter, concedes that it "may have been, in the course of official business, referred to the Circumlocution Office for its consideration," and that "the department may have either originated, or confirmed, a minute on the subject." In the "Household Words" paper, called "A Poor Man's Tale of a Patent" (1850), will be found a sufficiently elaborate study for Mr. Doyce's experiences of the government of his country, as wrathfully narrated by Mr. Meagles.

With the exception of the Circumlocution Office passages, —adventitious as they are to the progress of the action, "Little Dorrit" exhibits a palpable falling-off in inventive power. Forster illustrates by a striking facsimile the

difference between the "labour and pains" of the author's short notes for "Little Dorrit" and the "lightness and confidence of handling" in what hints he had jotted down for "David Copperfield." Indeed, his "tablets" had about this time begun to be an essential part of his literary equipment. But in "Little Dorrit" there are enough internal signs of, possibly unconscious, lassitude. The earlier, no doubt, is, in every respect, the better part of the book; or rather, the later part shows the author wearily at work upon a canvas too wide for him, and filling it up with a crowd of personages in whom it is difficult to take much interest. Even Mr. Merdle and his catastrophe produce the effect rather of a ghastly allegory than of an "extravagant conception," as the author ironically called it in his preface, derived only too directly from real life. In the earlier part of the book, in so far as it is not once again concerned with enforcing the moral of "Hard Times" in a different way, by means of Mrs. Clennam and her son's early history, the humour of Dickens plays freely over the figure of the Father of the Marshalsea. It is a psychological masterpiece in its way; but the revolting selfishness of Little Dorrit's father is not redeemed artistically by her own longsuffering; for her pathos lacks the old irresistible ring. Doubtless much in this part of the story—the whole episode, for instance, of the honest turnkey—is in the author's best manner. But admirable as it is, this new picture of prison-life and prison-sentiment has an undercurrent of bitterness, indeed, almost of contemptuousness, foreign to the best part of Dickens's genius. This is still more perceptible in a figure not less true to life than the Father of the Marshalsea himself—Flora, the overblown flower of Arthur Clennam's boyish love. The humour of the conception is undeniable, but the whole effect is cruel; and, though greatly amused, the reader feels almost as if he were abetting a profanation. Dickens could not have become what he is to the great multitude of his readers had he, as a humorist, often indulged in this cynical mood.

There is in general little in the characters of this fiction to compensate for the sense of oppression from which, as he follows the slow course of its far from striking plot, the reader finds it difficult to free himself. A vein of genuine humour shows itself in Mr. Plornish, obviously a favourite

of the author's, and one of those genuine working men, as rare in fiction as on the stage, where Mr. Toole has reproduced the species; but the relation between Mr. and Mrs. Plornish is only a fainter revival of that between Mr. and Mrs. Bagnet. Nor is there anything fresh or novel in the characters belonging to another social sphere. Henry Gowan, apparently intended as an elaborate study in psychology, is only a very tedious one; and his mother at Hampton Court, whatever phase of a dilapidated aristocracy she may be intended to caricature, is merely ill-bred. As for Mrs. General, she is so sorry a burlesque that she could not be reproduced without extreme caution even on the stage—to the reckless conventionalities of which, indeed, the whole picture of the Dorrit family as *nouveaux riches* bears a striking resemblance. There is, on the contrary, some good caricature, which, in one instance at least, was thought transparent by the knowing, in the *silhouettes* of the great Mr. Merdle's professional guests; but these are, like the Circumlocution Office puppets, satiric sketches, not the living figures of creative humour.

I have spoken of this story with a censure which may be regarded as exaggerated in its turn. But I well remember, at the time of its publication in numbers, the general consciousness that "Little Dorrit" was proving unequal to the high-strung expectations which a new work by Dickens then excited in his admirers both young and old. There were new and striking features in it, with abundant comic and serious effect, but there was no power in the whole story to seize and hold, and the feeling could not be escaped that the author was not at his best. And Dickens was not at his best when he wrote "Little Dorrit." Yet while nothing is more remarkable in the literary career of Dickens than this apparently speedy decline of his power, nothing is more wonderful in it than the degree to which he righted himself again, not, indeed, with his public, for the public never deserted its favourite, but with his genius.

A considerable part of "Little Dorrit" must have been written in Paris; where, in October, after a quiet autumn at Folkestone, Dickens had taken a family apartment in the Avenue des Champs Elysées, "about half a quarter of a mile above Franconi's." Here, after his fashion, he

lived much to himself, his family and his guests, only occasionally finding his way into a literary or artistic *salon*; but he sat for his portrait to both Ary and Henri Scheffer, and was easily persuaded to read his "Cricket on the Hearth" to an audience in the atelier. Macready and Wilkie Collins were in turn the companions of many "theatrical and lounging" evenings. Intent as Dickens now had become upon the technicalities of his own form of composition, this interest must have been greatly stimulated by the frequent comparison of modern French plays, in most of which nicety of construction and effectiveness of situation have so paramount a significance. At Boulogne, too, Wilkie Collins was a welcome summer visitor. And in the autumn the two friends started on the "Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices." It came to an untimely end as a pedestrian excursion, but the record of it is one of the pleasantest memorials of a friendship which brightened much of Dickens's life and intensified his activity in work as well as in pleasure.

"Mr. Thomas Idle" had indeed a busy time of it in this year 1857. The publication of "Little Dorrit" was not finished till June, and in August we find him, between a reading and a performance of "The Frozen Deep" at Manchester—then in the exciting days of the great Art Exhibition—thus describing to Macready his way of filling up his time: "I hope you have seen my tussle with the 'Edinburgh.' I saw the chance last Friday week, as I was going down to read the 'Carol' in St. Martin's Hall. Instantly turned to, then and there, and wrote half the article, flew out of bed early next morning, and finished it by noon. Went down to Gallery of Illustration (we acted that night), did the day's business, corrected the proofs in Polar costume in dressing-room, broke up two numbers of 'Household Words' to get it out directly, played in 'Frozen Deep' and 'Uncle John,' presided at supper of company, made no end of speeches, went home and gave in completely for four hours, then got sound sleep, and next day was as fresh as you used to be in the far-off days of your lusty youth." It was on the occasion of the readings at St. Martin's Hall, for the benefit of Douglas Jerrold's family, that the thought of giving readings for his own benefit first suggested itself to Dickens; and, as will be seen, by April, 1858, the idea

had been carried into execution, and a new phase of life had begun for him. And yet at this very time, when his home was about to cease being in the fullest sense a home to Dickens, by a strange irony of fortune, he had been enabled to carry out a long-cherished fancy and to take possession, in the first instance as a summer residence, of the house on Gadshill, of which a lucky chance had made him the owner rather more than a twelvemonth before.

"My little place," he wrote in 1858, to his Swiss friend Cerjat, "is a grave red-brick house (time of George the First, I suppose), which I have added to and stuck bits upon in all manner of ways, so that it is as pleasantly irregular, and as violently opposed to all architectural ideas, as the most hopeful man could possibly desire. It is on the summit of Gadshill. The robbery was committed before the door, on the man with the treasure, and Falstaff ran away from the identical spot of ground now covered by the room in which I write. A little rustic alehouse, called 'The Sir John Falstaff,' is over the way—has been over the way ever since, in honour of the event. . . . The whole stupendous property is on the old Dover road. . . ."

Among "the blessed woods and fields" which, as he says, had done him "a world of good," in a season of unceasing bodily and mental unrest, the great English writer had indeed found a habitation fitted to become inseparable from his name and fame. It was not till rather later, in 1860, that, after the sale of Tavistock House, Gadshill Place became his regular abode, a London house being only now and then taken for the season, while furnished rooms were kept at the office in Wellington Street for occasional use. And it was only gradually that he enlarged and improved his Kentish place so as to make it the pretty and comfortable country-house which at the present day it appears to be; constructing, in course of time, the passage under the highroad to the shrubbery, where the Swiss chalet given to him by Mr. Fechter was set up, and building the pretty little conservatory, which, when completed, he was not to live many days to enjoy. But an old-fashioned homely look, free from the slightest affectation of quietness, belonged to Gadshill Place, even after all these alterations, and belongs to it even at this day, when Dickens's solid old-fashioned furniture has been

changed. In the pretty little front hall still hangs the illuminated tablet recalling the legend of Gadshill; and on the inside panels of the library door remain the facetious sham book-titles: "Hudson's Complete Failure," and "Ten Minutes in China," and "Cats' Lives," and, on a long series of leather backs, "Hansard's Guide to Refreshing Sleep." The rooms are all of a modest size, and the bedrooms—among them Dickens's own—very low; but the whole house looks thoroughly habitable, while the views across the cornfields at the back are such as in their undulation of soft outline are nowhere more pleasant than in Kent. Rochester and the Medway are near, even for those who do not—like Dickens and his dogs—count a stretch past three or four "milestones on the Dover road" as the mere beginning of an afternoon's walk. At a distance little greater there are in one direction the green glades of Cobham Park, with Chalk and Gravesend beyond: and in another the flat country towards the Thames, with its abundance of market-gardens. There, too, are the marshes on the border of which lie the massive ruin of Cooling Castle, the refuge of the Lollard martyr who was *not* concerned in the affair on Gadshill, and Cooling Church and churchyard, with the quaint little gravestones in the grass. London and the office were within easy reach, and Paris itself was, for practical purposes, not much farther away, so that, in later days at all events, Dickens found himself "crossing the Channel perpetually."

The name of Dickens still has a good sound in and about Gadshill. He was on very friendly terms with some families whose houses stand near to his own; and though nothing was farther from his nature, as he says, than to "wear topboots" and play the squire, yet he had in him not a little of what endears so many a resident country gentleman to his neighbourhood. He was head organiser rather than chief patron of village sports, of cricket matches and foot-races; and his house was a dispensary for the poor of the parish. He established confidential relations between his house and the Falstaff Inn over the way, regulating his servants' consumption of beer on a strict but liberal plan of his own devising; but it is not for this reason only that the successor of Mr. Edwin Trood—for such was the veritable name of mine host of the Falstaff in Dickens's time—declares that it

was a bad day for the neighbourhood when Dickens was taken away from it. In return, nothing could exceed the enthusiasm which surrounded him in his own country, and Forster has described his astonishment at the manifestation of it on the occasion of the wedding of the youngest daughter of the house in 1860. And, indeed, he was born to be popular, and specially among those by whom he was beloved as a friend or honoured as a benefactor.

But it was not for long intervals of either work or rest that Dickens was to settle down in his pleasant country-house, nor was he ever, except quite at the last, to sit down under his own roof in peace and quiet, a wanderer no more. Less than a year after he had taken up his residence for the summer on Gadshill, his home, and that of his younger children, was his wife's home no longer. The separation, which appears to have been preparing itself for some, but no very long, time, took place in May, 1858, when, after an amicable arrangement, Mrs. Dickens left her husband, who henceforth allowed her an ample separate maintenance, and occasionally corresponded with her, but never saw her again. The younger children remained in their father's house under the self-sacrificing and devoted care of Mrs. Dickens's surviving sister, Miss Hogarth. Shortly afterwards, Dickens thought it well, in printed words which may be left forgotten, to rebut some slanderous gossip which, as the way of the world is, had misrepresented the circumstances of this separation. The causes of the event were an open secret to his friends and acquaintances. If he had ever loved his wife with that affection before which so-called incompatibilities of habits, temper, or disposition fade into nothingness, there is no indication of it in any of his numerous letters addressed to her. Neither has it ever been pretended that he strove in the direction of that resignation which love and duty together made possible to David Copperfield, or even that he remained in every way master of himself, as many men have known how to remain, the story of whose wedded life and its disappointments has never been written in history or figured in fiction. It was not incumbent upon his faithful friend and biographer, and much less can it be upon one whom nothing but a sincere admiration of Dickens's genius en-

titles to speak of him at all, to declare the standard by which the most painful transaction in his life is to be judged. I say the most painful, for it is with a feeling akin to satisfaction that one reads, in a letter three years afterwards to a lady in reference to her daughter's wedding: "I want to thank you also for thinking of me on the occasion, but I feel that I am better away from it. I should really have a misgiving that I was a sort of a shadow on a young marriage, and you will understand me when I say so, and no more." A shadow, too—who would deny it?—falls on every one of the pictures in which the tenderest of modern humorists has painted the simple joys and the sacred sorrow of that home life of which to his generation he had become almost the poet and the prophet, when we remember how he was himself neither blessed with its full happiness nor capable of accepting with resignation the imperfection inherent in it, as in all things human.

CHAPTER VI.

LAST YEARS.

1858—1870.

THE last twelve years of Dickens's life were busy years like the others; but his activity was no longer merely the expression of exuberant force, and long before the collapse came he had been repeatedly warned of the risks he continued to defy. When, however, he first entered upon those public readings, by persisting in which he indisputably hastened his end, neither he nor his friends took into account the fear of bodily ill-effects resulting from his exertions. Their misgivings had other grounds. Of course, had there been any pressure of pecuniary difficulty or need upon Dickens when he began, or when, on successive occasions he resumed, his public readings, there would be nothing further to be said. But I see no suggestion of any such pressure. "My worldly circumstances," he wrote before he had finally made up his mind to read

in America, "are very good. I don't want money. All my possessions are free and in the best order. Still," he added, "at fifty-five or fifty-six, the likelihood of making a very great addition to one's capital in half a year is an immense consideration." Moreover, with all his love of doing as he chose, and his sense of the value of such freedom to him as a writer, he was a man of simple though liberal habits of life, with no taste for the gorgeous or capricious extravagances of a Balzac or a Dumas, nor can he have been at a loss how to make due provision for those whom in the course of nature he would leave behind him. Love of money for its own sake, or for that of the futilities it can purchase, was altogether foreign to his nature. At the same time, the rapid making of large sums has potent attractions for most men; and these attractions are perhaps strongest for those who engage in the pursuit for the sake of the race as well as of the prize. Dickens's readings were virtually something new; their success was not only all his own, but unique and unprecedented, what nobody but himself ever had achieved or ever could have achieved. Yet the determining motive—if I read his nature rightly—was, after all, of another kind. "Two souls dwelt in his breast"; and when their aspirations united in one appeal it was irresistible. The author who craved for the visible signs of a sympathy responding to that which he felt for his multitudes of readers, and the actor who longed to impersonate creations already beings of flesh and blood to himself, were both astir in him, and in both capacities he felt himself drawn into the very publicity deprecated by his friends. He liked, as one who knew him thoroughly said to me, to be face to face with his public; and against this liking, which he had already indulged as fully as he could without passing the boundaries between private and professional life, arguments were in vain. It has been declared sheer pedantry to speak of such boundaries; and to suggest that there is anything degrading in paid readings such as those of Dickens would, on the face of it, be absurd. On the other hand, the author who, on or off the stage, becomes the interpreter of his writings to large audiences, more especially if he does his best to stereotype his interpretation by constantly repeating it, limits his own prerogative of being many things to many men; and where the author

of a work, more particularly of a work of fiction, adjusts it to circumstances differing from those of its production, he allows the requirements of the lesser art to prejudice the claims of the greater.

Dickens cannot have been blind to these considerations; but to others his eyes were never opened. He found much that was inspiriting in his success as a reader, and this not only in the large sums he gained, or even in the "roaring sea of response," to use his own fine metaphor, of which he had become accustomed to "stand upon the beach." His truest sentiment as an author was touched to the quick; and he was, as he says himself, "brought very near to what he had sometimes dreamed might be his fame," when at York, a lady, whose face he had never seen, stopped him in the street, and said to him: "Mr. Dickens, will you let me touch the hand that has filled my house with many friends?" or when at Belfast, he was almost overwhelmed with entreaties "to shake hands, Misther Dickens, and God bless you, sir; not ounly for the light you've been to me this night, but for the light you've been in mee house, sir—and God love your face!—this many a year." On the other hand—and this, perhaps, a nature like his would not be the quickest to perceive—there was something vulgarising in the constant striving after immediate success, in the shape of large audiences, loud applause, and satisfactory receipts. The conditions of the actor's art cannot forego these stimulants; and this is precisely his disadvantage in comparison with artists who are able to possess themselves in quiet. To me, at least, it is painful to find Dickens jubilantly recording how at Dublin "eleven bank-notes were thrust into the pay-box—Arthur saw them—at one time for eleven stalls"; how at Edinburgh, "neither Grisi, nor Jenny Lind, nor anything, nor anybody, seems to make the least effect on the draw of the readings"; while, every allowance being made, there is something almost ludicrous in the double assertion, that "the most delicate audience I had ever seen in any provincial place is Canterbury; but the audience with the greatest sense of humour, certainly is Dover." What subjects for parody Dickens would have found in these innocent ecstasies if uttered by any other man! Undoubtedly, this enthusiasm was closely connected with the very thoroughness with which he entered into the

work of his readings. The freshness with which he returned night after night and season after season, to the sphere of his previous successes, was itself a genuine actor's gift; "so real," he declares, "are my fictions to myself, that, after hundreds of nights, I come with a feeling of perfect freshness to that little red table, and laugh and cry with my hearers as if I had never stood there before."

The books, or portions of books, to which he confined himself during this first series of readings, were few in number. They comprised the "Carol" and "The Chimes," and two stories from earlier Christmas numbers of "Household Words"—may the exclamation of the soft-hearted chambermaid at the Holly Tree Inn, "It's a shame to part 'em!" never vanish from my memory!—together with the episodic readings of the "Trial" in "Pickwick," "Mrs. Gamp," and "Paul Dombey." Of these the "Pickwick," which I heard more than once, is still vividly present to me. The only drawback to the complete enjoyment of it was the lurking fear that there had been some tampering with the text, not to be condoned even in its author. But in the way of assumption, Charles Mathews the elder himself could have accomplished no more Protean effort. The lacklustre eye of Mr. Justice Stareleigh, the forensic hitch of Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz, and the hopeless impotence of Mr. Nathaniel Winkle, were alike incomparable. And if the success of the impersonation of Mr. Samuel Weller was less complete—although Dickens had formerly acted the character on an amateur stage—the reason probably was that, by reason of his endless store of ancient and modern instances, Sam had himself become a quasi-mythical being, whom it was almost painful to find reproduced in flesh and blood.

I have not hesitated to treat these readings by Dickens as if they had been the performances of an actor; and the description would apply even more strongly to his later readings, in which he seemed to make his points in a more accentuated fashion than before. "His readings," says Mr. C. Kent, in an interesting little book about them, "were, in the fullest meaning of the words, singularly ingenious and highly-elaborated histrionic performances." As such, they had been prepared with a care such as few actors bestow upon their parts, and—for the book was pre-

pared not less than the reading—not all authors bestow upon their plays. Now the art of reading, even in the case of dramatic works, has its own laws, which even the most brilliant readers cannot neglect except at their peril. A proper pitch has to be found in the first instance, before the exceptional passages can be, as it were, marked off from it; and the absence of this groundtone sometimes interfered with the total effect of a reading by Dickens. On the other hand, the exceptional passages were, if not uniformly, at least generally excellent; nor am I at all disposed to agree with Forster in preferring, as a rule, the humorous to the pathetic. At the same time, there was noticeable in these readings a certain hardness which competent critics likewise discerned in Dickens's acting, and which could not, at least in the former case, be regarded as an ordinary characteristic of dilettanteism. The truth is that he isolated his parts too sharply—a frequent fault of English acting, and one more detrimental to the total effect of a reading than even to that of an acted play.

No sooner had the heaviest stress of the first series of readings ceased, than Dickens was once more at work upon a new fiction. The more immediate purpose was to ensure a prosperous launch to the journal which, in the spring of 1859, took the place of "Household Words." A dispute, painful in its origin, but ending in an amicable issue, had resulted in the purchase of that journal by Dickens; but already a little earlier, he had—as he was entitled to do—begun the new venture of "All the Year Round," with which "Household Words" was afterwards incorporated. The first number, published on April 30th, contained the earliest instalment of "A Tale of Two Cities," which was completed by November 20th following.

This story holds a unique place among the fictions of its author. Perhaps the most striking difference between it and his other novels may seem to lie in the all but entire absence from it of any humour or attempt at humour; for neither the brutalities of that "honest tradesman," Jerry, nor the laconisms of Miss Pross, can well be called by that name. Not that his sources of humour were drying up, even though, about this time, he contributed to an American journal a short "romance of the real world," "Hunted Down," from which the same relief is again conspicuously absent. For the humour of

Dickens was to assert itself with unmistakable force in his next longer fiction, and was even before that, in some of his occasional papers, to give delightful proofs of its continued vigour. In the case of "A Tale of Two Cities," he had a new and distinct design in his mind which did not indeed exclude humour, but with which a liberal indulgence in it must have seriously interfered. "I set myself," he writes, "the little task of writing a picturesque story, rising in every chapter with characters true to nature, but whom the story itself should express more than they should express themselves by dialogue. I mean, in other words, that I fancied a story of incident might be written, in place of the bestiality that is written under that pretence, pounding the characters out in its own mortar, and beating their own interests out of them." He therefore renounced his more usual method in favour of one probably less congenial to him. Yet, in his own opinion at least, he succeeded so well in the undertaking, that when the story was near its end, he could venture to express a hope that it was "the best story he had written." So much praise will hardly be given to this novel even by admirers of the French art of telling a story succinctly, or by those who can never resist a rather hysterical treatment of the French Revolution.

In my own opinion, "A Tale of Two Cities" is a skilfully though not perfectly constructed novel, which needed but little substantial alteration in order to be converted into a not less effective stage-play. And with such a design, Dickens actually sent the proof-sheets of the book to his friend Regnier, in the fearful hope that he might approve of the project of its dramatisation for a French theatre. Cleverly or clumsily adapted, the tale of the Revolution and its sanguinary vengeance was unlikely to commend itself to the Imperial censorship; but an English version was, I believe, afterwards very fairly successful on the boards of the Adelphi, where Madame Celeste was certainly in her right place as Madame Defarge, an excellent character for a melodrama, though rather wearisome as she lies in wait through half a novel.

The construction of this story is, as I have said, skilful but not perfect. Dickens himself successfully defended his use of accident in bringing about the death of Madame Defarge; the real objection to the conduct of this episode,

however, lies in the inadequacy of the contrivance for leaving Miss Pross behind in Paris. Too much is also, I think, made to turn upon the three words "and their descendants"—non-essential in the original connection—by which Dr. Manette's written denunciation becomes fatal to those he loves. Still, the general edifice of the plot is solid; its interest is, notwithstanding the crowded background, concentrated with much skill upon a small group of personages; and Carton's self-sacrifice, admirably prepared from the very first, produces a legitimate tragic effect. At the same time, the novelist's art vindicates its own claims. Not only does this story contain several narrative episodes of remarkable power—such as the flight from Paris at the close, and the touching little incident of the seamstress, told in Dickens's sweetest pathetic manner—but it is likewise enriched by some descriptive pictures of unusual excellence: for instance, the sketch of Dover in the good old smuggling times, and the mezzotint of the stormy evening in Soho. Doubtless the increased mannerism of the style is disturbing, and this not only in the high-strung French scenes. As to the historical element in this novel, Dickens modestly avowed his wish that he might by his story have been able "to add something to the popular and picturesque means of understanding that terrible time, though no one can hope to add anything to Mr. Carlyle's wonderful book." But if Dickens desired to depict the noble of the *ancien régime*, either according to Carlyle or according to intrinsic probability, he should not have offered, in his Marquis, a type historically questionable, and unnatural besides. The description of the Saint Antoine, before and during the bursting of the storm, has in it more of truthfulness, or of the semblance of truthfulness; and Dickens's perception of the physiognomy of the French workman is, I think, remarkably accurate. Altogether, the book is an extraordinary *tour de force*, which Dickens never repeated.

The opening of a new story by Dickens gave the necessary *impetus* to his new journal at its earliest stage; nor was the ground thus gained ever lost. Mr. W. H. Wills stood by his chief's side as of old, taking, more especially in later years, no small share of responsibility upon him. The prospectus of "All the Year Round" had not in vain promised an identity of principle in its conduct with that

of its predecessor; in energy and spirit it showed no falling off; and, though not in all respects, the personality of Dickens made itself felt as distinctly as ever. Besides "A Tale of Two Cities," he contributed to it his story of "Great Expectations." Among his contributors, Wilkie Collins took away the breath of multitudes of readers; Charles Reade disported himself among the facts which gave stamina to his fiction; and Lord Lytton made a daring voyage into a mysterious country. Thither Dickens followed him, for once, in his "Four Stories," not otherwise noteworthy, and written in a manner already difficult to discriminate from that of Wilkie Collins. For the rest, the advice with which Dickens aided Lord Lytton's progress in his "Strange Story" was neither more ready nor more painstaking than that which he bestowed upon his younger contributors, to more than one of whom he generously gave the opportunity of publishing in his journal a long work of fiction. Some of these younger writers were at this period among his most frequent guests and associates; for nothing more naturally commended itself to him than the encouragement of the younger generation.

But though longer imaginative works played at least as conspicuous a part in the new journal as they had in the old, the conductor likewise continued to make manifest his intention that the lesser contributions should not be treated by readers or by writers as harmless necessary "padding." For this purpose it was requisite not only that the choice of subjects should be made with the utmost care, but also that the master's hand should itself be occasionally visible. Dickens's occasional contributions had been few and unimportant, till in a happy hour he began a series of papers, including many of the pleasantest, as well as of the mellowest, among the lighter productions of his pen. As usual, he had taken care to find for this series a name which of itself went far to make its fortune. "I am both a town and a country traveller, and am always on the road. Figuratively speaking, I travel for the great house of Human Interest Brothers, and have rather a large connection in the fancy goods way. Literally speaking, I am always wandering here and there from my rooms in Covent Garden, London—now about the city streets, now about the country byroads, seeing many little things

and some great things, which, because they interest me, I think may interest others."

The whole collection of these "Uncommercial Traveller" papers, together with the "Uncommercial Samples" which succeeded them after Dickens's return from America, and which begin with a graphic account of his homeward voyage "Aboard Ship," where the voice of conscience spoke in the motion of the screw, amounts to thirty-seven articles, and spreads over a period of nine years. They are necessarily of varying merit, but among them are some which deserve a permanent place in our lighter literature. Such are the description of the churchyards on a quiet evening in "The City of the Absent," the grotesque picture of loneliness in "Chambers"—a favourite theme with Dickens—and the admirable papers on "Shy Neighbourhoods" and on "Tramps." Others have a biographical interest, though delightfully objective in treatment; yet others are mere fugitive pieces; but there are few without some of the most attractive qualities of Dickens's easiest style.

Dickens contributed other occasional papers to his journal, some of which may be forgotten without injury to his fame. Among these may be reckoned the rather dreary "George Silverman's Explanation" (1868), in which there is nothing characteristic but a vivid picture of a set of ranters, led by a clique of scoundrels; on the other hand, there will always be admirers of the pretty "Holiday Romance," published nearly simultaneously in America and England, a nosegay of tales told by children, the only fault of which is that, as with other children's nosegays, there is perhaps a little too much of it. Meanwhile, the special institution of the Christmas Number flourished in connection with "All the Year Round" down to the year 1867, as it had during the last five years of "Household Words." It consisted, with the exception of the very last number, of a series of short stories, in a framework of the editor's own devising. To the authors of the stories, of which he invariably himself wrote one or more, he left the utmost liberty, at times stipulating for nothing but that tone of cheerful philanthropy, which he had domesticated in his journal. In the Christmas Numbers, which gradually attained to such a popularity that of one of the last something like a quarter of a million copies

were sold, Dickens himself shone most conspicuously in the introductory sections; and some of these are to be reckoned among his very best descriptive character-sketches. Already in "Household Words" Christmas Numbers the introductory sketch of the "Seven Poor Travellers" from Watts's charity at supper in the Rochester hostelry, and the excellent description of a winter journey and sojourn at the "Holly Tree Inn," with an excursus on inns in general, had become widely popular; the "All the Year Round" Numbers, however, largely augmented this success. After "Tom Tiddler's Ground," with the adventures of Miss Kitty Kimmeens, a pretty little morality in miniature, teaching the same lesson as the vagaries of Mr. Mopes the hermit, came "Somebody's Luggage," with its exhaustive disquisition on waiters; and then the memorable chirpings of "Mrs. Lirriper," in both "Lodgings" and "Legacy," admirable in the delicacy of their pathos, and including an inimitable picture of London lodging-house life. Then followed the "Prescriptions" of "Dr. Marigold," the eloquent and sarcastic but tender-hearted Cheap Jack; and "Mugby Junction," which gave words to the cry of a whole nation of hungry and thirsty travellers. In the tales and sketches contributed by him to the Christmas Numbers, in addition to these introductions, he at times gave the rein to his love for the fanciful and the grotesque, which there was here no reason to keep under. On the whole, written as in a sense these compositions were to order, nothing is more astonishing in them than his continued freshness, against which his mannerism is here of vanishing importance; and, inasmuch as after issuing a last Christmas Number of a different kind, Dickens abandoned the custom when it had reached the height of popular favour, and when manifold imitations had offered him the homage of their flattery, he may be said to have withdrawn from this campaign in his literary life with banners flying.

In the year 1859 Dickens's readings had been comparatively few; and they had ceased altogether in the following year, when the "Uncommercial Traveller" began his wanderings. The winter from 1859 to 1860 was his last winter at Tavistock House; and, with the exception of his rooms in Wellington Street, he had now no settled residence but Gadshill Place. He sought its pleasant re-

treat about the beginning of June, after the new experience of an attack of rheumatism had made him recognise "the necessity of country training all through the summer." Yet such was the recuperative power, or the indomitable self-confidence, of his nature, that after he had in these summer months contributed some of the most delightful "Uncommercial Traveller" papers to his journal, we find him already in August "prowling about, meditating a new book."

It is refreshing to think of Dickens in this pleasant interval of country life, before he had rushed once more into the excitement of his labours as a public reader. We may picture him to ourselves, accompanied by his dogs, striding along the country roads and lanes, exploring the haunts of the country tramps, "a piece of Kentish road," for instance, "bordered on either side by a wood, and having on one hand, between the road dust and the trees, a skirting patch of grass. Wild flowers grow in abundance on this spot, and it lies high and airy, with a distant river stealing steadily away to the ocean like a man's life. To gain the milestone here, which the moss, primroses, violets, bluebells, and wild roses would soon render illegible but for peering travellers pushing them aside with their sticks, you must come up a steep hill come which way you may." At the foot of that hill, I fancy, lay Dullborough town half asleep in the summer afternoon; and the river in the distance was that which bounded the horizon of a little boy's vision "whose father's family name was Pirrip, and whose christian-name was Philip, but whose infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip."

The story of Pip's adventures, the novel of "Great Expectations," was thought over in these Kentish perambulations between Thames and Medway along the road which runs, apparently with the intention of running out to sea, from Higham towards the marshes; in the lonely churchyard of Cooling village by the thirteen little stone-lozenges, of which Pip counted only five, now nearly buried in their turn by the rank grass; and in quiet saunters through the familiar streets of Rochester, past the "queer" town hall; and through the "Vines" past the fine old Restoration House, called in the book (by the name of an altogether different edifice) Satis House.

And the climax of the narrative was elaborated on a unique steamboat excursion from London to the mouth of the Thames, broken by a night at the Ship and Lobster, an old riverside inn called The Ship in the story. No wonder that Dickens's descriptive genius should become refreshed by these studies of his subject, and that thus "Great Expectations" should have indisputably become one of the most picturesque of his books. But it is something very much more at the same time. "A Tale of Two Cities" had as a story strongly seized upon the attention of the reader. But in the earlier chapters of "Great Expectations" everyone felt that Dickens was himself again. Since the Yarmouth scenes in "David Copperfield" he had written nothing in which description married itself to sentiment so humorously and so tenderly. Uncouth, and slow, and straightforward, and gentle of heart, like Mr. Peggotty, Joe Gargery is as new a conception as he is a genuinely true one; nor is it easy to know under what aspect to relish him most, whether disconsolate in his Sunday clothes, "like some extraordinary bird, standing, as he did, speechless, with his tuft of feathers ruffled, and his mouth open as if he wanted a worm," or at home by his own fireside, winking at his little comrade, and, when caught in the act by his wife, "drawing the back of his hand across his nose with his usual conciliatory air on such occasions." Nor since "David Copperfield" had Dickens again shown such an insight as he showed here into the world of a child's mind. "To be quite sure," he wrote to Forster, "I had fallen into no unconscious repetitions, I read 'David Copperfield' again the other day, and was affected by it to a degree you would hardly believe." His fears were unnecessary; for with all its charm the history of Pip lacks the personal element which insures our sympathy to the earlier story and to its hero. In delicacy of feeling, however, as well as in humour of description, nothing in Dickens surpasses the earlier chapters of "Great Expectations"; and equally excellent is the narrative of Pip's disloyalty of heart towards his early friends, down to his departure from the forge, a picture of pitiable selfishness almost Rousseau-like in its fidelity to poor human nature, down to his comic humiliation, when in the pride of his new position and his new clothes, before "that unlimited

miscreant, Trabb's boy." The later and especially the concluding portions of this novel contain much that is equal in power to its opening; but it must be allowed that, before many chapters have ended, a false tone finds its way into the story. The whole history of Miss Havisham, and the crew of relations round the unfortunate creature, is strained and unnatural, and Estella's hardness is as repulsive as that of Edith Dombey herself. Mr. Jaggers and his housekeeper, and even Mr. Wemmick, have an element of artificiality in them, while about the Pocket family there is little, if anything at all, that is real. The story, however, seems to recover itself as the main thread in its deftly-woven texture is brought forward again, when on a dark gusty night, ominous of coming trouble, the catastrophe of Pip's expectations announces itself in the return from abroad of his unknown benefactor, the convict whom he had as a child fed on the marshes. The remainder of the narrative is successful in conveying to the reader the sense of sickening anxiety which fills the hero: the interest is skilfully sustained by the introduction of a very strong situation—Pip's narrow escape out of the clutches of "Old Orlick" in the limekiln on the marshes: and the climax is reached in the admirably-executed narrative of the convict's attempt, with the aid of Pip, to escape by the river. The actual winding-up of "Great Expectations" is not altogether satisfactory, but on the whole the book must be ranked among the very best of Dickens's later novels, as combining, with the closer construction and intenser narrative force common to several of these, not a little of the delightfully genial humour of his earlier works.

Already before "Great Expectations" was completely published, Dickens had given a few readings at the St. James's Hall, and by the end of October in the same year, 1861, he was once more engaged in a full course of country readings. They occupied him till the following January, only ten days being left for his Christmas Number, and a brief holiday for Christmas itself; so close was the adjustment of time and work by this favourite of fortune. The death of his faithful Arthur Smith * befell most untowardly before the country readings were begun, but their success was unbroken, from Scotland to South

* His manager.

Devon. The long-contemplated extract from "Copperfield" had at last been added to the list—a self-sacrifice *coram publico*, hallowed by success—and another from "Nicholas Nickleby," which "went in the wildest manner." He was, however, nearly worn out with fatigue before these winter readings were over, and was glad to snatch a moment of repose before a short spring course in town began. Scarcely was this finished, when he was coquetting in his mind with an offer from Australia, and had already proposed to himself to throw in, as a piece of work by the way, a series of papers to be called "The Uncommercial Traveller Upside Down." Meanwhile, a few readings for a charitable purpose in Paris, and a short summer course at St. James's Hall, completed this second series in the year 1863.

Whatever passing thoughts overwork by day or sleeplessness at night may have occasionally brought with them, Dickens himself would have been strangely surprised, as no doubt would have been the great body of a public to which he was by this time about the best-known man in England, had he been warned that weakness and weariness were not to be avoided even by a nature endowed with faculties so splendid and with an energy so conquering as his. He seemed to stand erect in the strength of his matured powers, equal as of old to any task which he set himself, and exulting, though with less buoyancy of spirit than of old, in the wreaths which continued to strew his path. Yet already the ranks of his contemporaries were growing thinner, while close to himself death was taking away members of the generation before, and of that after, his own. Among them was his mother—of whom his biography and his works have little to say or to suggest—and his second son. Happy events, too, had in the due course of things contracted the family circle at Gadshill. Of his intimates, he lost, in 1863, Augustus Egg; and in 1864, John Leech, to whose genius he had himself formerly rendered eloquent homage.

A still older associate, the great painter Stanfield, survived till 1867; "no one of your father's friends," Dickens then wrote to Stanfield's son, "can ever have loved him more dearly than I always did, or can have better known the worth of his noble character." Yet another friend, who, however, so far as I can gather, had not, at any time,

belonged to Dickens's most familiar circle, had died on Christmas Eve, 1863—Thackeray, whom it had for some time become customary to compare or contrast with him as his natural rival. Yet in point of fact, save for the tenderness which, as with all humorists of the highest order, was an important element in their writings, and save for the influences of time and country to which they were both subject, there are hardly two other among our great humorists who have less in common. Their unlikeness shows itself, among other things, in the use made by Thackeray of suggestions which it is difficult to believe he did not in the first instance owe to Dickens. Who would venture to call Captain Costigan a plagiarism from Mr. Snevellici, or to assert that Wenham and Wagg were copied from Pyke and Pluck, or that Major Pendennis—whose pardon one feels inclined to beg for the juxtaposition—was founded upon Major Bagstock, or the Old Campaigner in "The Newcomes" on the Old Soldier in "Copperfield"? But that suggestions were in these and perhaps in a few other instances derived from Dickens by Thackeray for some of his most masterly characters, it would, I think, be idle to deny. In any case, the style of these two great writers differed as profoundly as their way of looking at men and things. Yet neither of them lacked a thorough appreciation of the other's genius; and it is pleasant to remember that after paying in "Pendennis" a tribute to the purity of Dickens's books, Thackeray, in a public lecture, referred to his supposed rival in a way which elicited from the latter the warmest of acknowledgments. It cannot be said that the memorial words, which after Thackeray's death Dickens was prevailed upon to contribute to the "Cornhill Magazine," did more than justice to the great writer whom England had just lost; but it is well that the kindly and unstinting tribute of admiration should remain on record, to contradict any supposition that a disagreement which had some years previously disturbed the harmony of their intercourse, and of which the world had, according to its wont, made the most, had really estranged two generous minds from one another. The effort which on this occasion Dickens made, is in itself a proof of his kindly feeling towards Thackeray. Of Talfourd and Landor and Stanfield, he could write readily after their deaths, but he frankly told Wilkie Collins

that, "had he felt he could," he would most gladly have excused himself from writing the "couple of pages" about Thackeray.

Dickens, it should be remembered, was at no time a man of many friends. The mere dalliance of friendship was foreign to one who worked so indefatigably in his hours of recreation as well as of labour; and fellowship in work of one kind or another seems to have been, in later years at all events, the surest support to his intimacy. Yet he was most easily drawn, not only to those who could help him, but to those whom he could help in congenial pursuits and undertakings. Such was, no doubt, the origin of his friendship in these later years with an accomplished French actor on the English boards, whom, in a rather barren period of our theatrical history, Dickens may have been justified in describing as "far beyond anyone on our stage," and who certainly was an "admirable artist." In 1864, Fechter had taken the Lyceum, the management of which he was to identify with a more elegant kind of melodrama than that long domesticated lower down the Strand; and Dickens was delighted to bestow on him counsel frankly sought and frankly given. As an author, too, he directly associated himself with the art of his friend.* For I may mention here by anticipation, that the last of the "All the Year Round" Christmas Numbers, the continuous story of "No Thoroughfare," was written by Dickens and Wilkie Collins in 1867 with a direct eye to its subsequent adaptation to the stage, for which it actually was fitted by Wilkie Collins in the following year. The place of its production, the Adelphi, suited the broad effects and the rather conventional comic humour of the story and piece. From America, Dickens watched the preparation of the piece with unflagging interest; and his innate and irrepressible genius for stage-management reveals itself in the following passage from a letter written by him to an American friend soon after

* One of the last things ever written by Dickens was a criticism of Fechter's acting, intended to introduce him to the American public. A false report, by the way, declared Dickens to have been the author of the dramatic version of Scott's novel, which at Christmas, 1865–66, was produced at the Lyceum, under the title of "The Master of Ravenswood"; but he allowed that he had done "a great deal towards and about the piece, having an earnest desire to put Scott, for once, on the stage in his own gallant manner."

his return to England: "'No Thoroughfare' is very shortly coming out in Paris, where it is now in active rehearsal. It is still playing here, but without Fechter, who has been very ill. He and Wilkie raised so many pieces of stage-effect here, that, unless I am quite satisfied with the report, I shall go over and try my stage-managerial hand at the Vaudeville Theatre. I particularly want the drugging and attempted robbery in the bedroom-scene at the Swiss Inn to be done to the sound of a waterfall rising and falling with the wind. Although in the very opening of that scene they speak of the waterfall, and listen to it, nobody thought of its mysterious music. I could make it, with a good stage-carpenter, in an hour."

"Great Expectations" had been finished in 1860, and already in the latter part of 1861, the year which comprised the main portion of his second series of readings, he had been thinking of a new story. He had even found a title—the unlucky title which he afterwards adopted—but in 1862 the tempting Australian invitation had been a serious obstacle in his way. "I can force myself to go aboard a ship, and I can force myself to do at that reading-desk what I have done a hundred times; but whether, with all this unsettled fluctuating distress in my mind, I could force an original book out of it, is another question." Nor was it the "unsettled fluctuating distress" which made it a serious effort for him to attempt another longer fiction. Dickens shared with most writers the experience that both the inventive power and the elasticity of memory decline with advancing years. Already since the time when he was thinking of writing "Little Dorrit" it had become his habit to enter in a book kept for the purpose, memoranda for possible future use, hints for subjects of stories,* scenes, situations, and characters; thoughts and fancies of all kinds; titles for possible books. Of these, "Somebody's Luggage," "Our Mutual Friend," and "No Thoroughfare"—the last an old fancy revived—came to honourable use; as did many names, both christian and surnames, and combinations of both. Thus Bradley Headstone's *prænomen* was derived directly from the lists of the Education

* Dickens undoubtedly had a genius for titles. Among some which he suggested for the use of a friend and contributor to his journal, are "What will he do with it?" and "Can he forgive her?"

Department, and the Lammles and the Stiltstalkings, with Mr. Merdle and the Dorrits, existed as names before the characters were fitted to them. All this, though no doubt in part attributable to the playful readiness of an observation never to be caught asleep, points in the direction of a desire to be securely provided with an armoury of which, in earlier days, he would have taken slight thought.

Gradually, indeed, so far as I know, more gradually than in the case of any other of his stories, he had built up the tale for which he had determined on the title of "Our Mutual Friend," and slowly, and without his old self-confidence, he had, in the latter part of 1863, set to work upon it. "I want to prepare it for the spring, but I am determined not to begin to publish with less than five numbers done. I see my opening perfectly, with the one main line on which the story is to turn, and if I don't strike while the iron (meaning myself) is hot, I shall drift off again, and have to go through all this uneasiness once more." For, unfortunately, he had resolved on returning to the old twenty-number measure for his new story. Begun with an effort, "Our Mutual Friend" —the publication of which extended from May, 1864, to November, 1865—was completed under difficulties, and difficulties of a kind hitherto unknown to Dickens. In February, 1865, as an immediate consequence, perhaps, of exposure at a time when depression of spirits rendered him less able than usual to bear it, he had a severe attack of illness, of which Forster says that it "put a broad mark between his past life and what remained to him of the future." From this time forward he felt a lameness in his left foot, which continued to trouble him at intervals during the remainder of his life, and which finally communicated itself to the left hand. A comparison of times, however, convinced Forster that the real origin of this ailment was to be sought in general causes.

In 1865, as the year wore on, and the pressure of the novel still continued, he felt that he was "working himself into a damaged state," and was near to that which has greater terrors for natures like his than for more placid temperaments—breaking down. So, in May, he went first to the seaside and then to France. On his return—it was the 9th of June, the date of his death five years afterwards

—he was in the railway train which met with a fearful accident at Staplehurst, in Kent. Nineteen months afterwards, when on a hurried reading tour in the North, he complains to Miss Hogarth of the effect of the railway shaking which since the Staplehurst accident "tells more and more." It is clear how serious a shock the accident had caused. He never, Miss Hogarth thinks, quite recovered it. Yet it might have acted less disastrously upon a system not already nervously weakened. As evidence of the decline of Dickens's nervous power, I hardly know whether it is safe to refer to the gradual change in his handwriting, which in his last years is a melancholy study.

All these circumstances should be taken into account in judging of Dickens's last completed novel. The author would not have been himself, had he, when once fairly engaged upon his work, failed to feel something of his old self-confidence. Nor was this feeling, which he frankly confessed to Wilkie Collins, altogether unwarranted. "Our Mutual Friend" * is, like the rest of Dickens's later writings, carefully and skilfully put together as a story. No exception is to be taken to it on the ground that the identity on which much of the plot hinges is long foreseen by the reader; for this, as Dickens told his critics in his postscript, had been part of his design, and was, in fact, considering the general nature of the story, almost indispensable. The defect rather lies in the absence of that element of uncertainty which is needed in order to sustain the interest. The story is, no doubt, ingeniously enough constructed, but admiration of an ingenious construction is insufficient to occupy the mind of a reader through an inevitable disentanglement. Moreover, some of the machinery, though cleverly contrived, cannot be said to work easily. Thus, the *ruse* of the excellent Boffin in playing the part of a skinflint might pass as a momentary device, but its inherent improbability, together with the likelihood of its leading to an untoward result, makes its protraction undeniably tedious. It is not, however, in my opinion at least, in the matter of construction that "Our

* This title has helped to extinguish the phrase of which it consists. Few would now be found to agree with the last clause of Flora's parenthesis in "Little Dorrit": "Our mutual friend—too cold a word for me; at least I don't mean that, very proper expression, mutual friend."

Mutual Friend" presents a painful contrast with earlier works produced, like it, "on a large canvas." The conduct of the story as a whole is fully vigorous enough to enchain the attention; and in portions of it the hand of the master displays its unique power. He is at his best in the whole of the waterside scenes, both where The Six Jolly Fellowship Porters (identified by zealous discoverers with a tavern called The Two Brewers) lies like an oasis in the midst of a desert of ill-favoured tidal deposits, and where Rogue Riderhood has his lair at the lock higher up the river. A marvellous union of observation and imagination was needed for the picturing of a world in which this amphibious monster has his being; and never did Dickens's inexhaustible knowledge of the physiognomy of the Thames and its banks stand him in better stead than in these powerful episodes. It is unfortunate, though in accordance with the common fate of heroes and heroines, that Lizzie Hexam should, from the outset, have to discard the colouring of her surroundings, and to talk the conventional dialect as well as express the conventional sentiments of the heroic world. Only at the height of the action she ceases to be commonplace, and becomes entitled to be remembered among the true heroines of fiction. A more unusual figure, of the half-pathetic, half-grotesque kind for which Dickens had a peculiar liking, is Lizzie's friend, the dolls' dressmaker, into whom he has certainly infused an element of genuine sentiment; her protector, Riah, on the contrary, is a mere stage-saint, though by this character Dickens appears to have actually hoped to redeem the aspersions he was supposed to have cast upon the Jews, as if Riah could have redeemed Fagin any more than Sheva redeemed Shylock.

But in this book whole episodes and parts of the plot through which the mystery of John Harmon winds its length along, are ill adapted for giving pleasure to any reader. The whole Boffin, Wegg, and Venus business—if the term may pass—is extremely wearisome; the character of Mr. Venus, in particular, seems altogether unconnected or unarticulated with the general plot, on which, indeed, it is but an accidental excrescence. In the Wilfer family there are the outlines of some figures of genuine humour, but the outlines only; nor is Bella raised into the sphere of the charming out of that of the pert and skittish. A more

ambitious attempt, and a more noteworthy failure, was the endeavour to give to the main plot of this novel such a satiric foil as the Circumlocution Office had furnished to the chief action of "Little Dorrit," in a caricature of society at large, its surface varnish and its internal rottenness. The Barnacles, and those who deemed it their duty to rally round the Barnacles, had, we saw, felt themselves hard hit; but what sphere or section of society could feel itself specially caricatured in the Veneerings, or in their associates—the odious Lady Tippins, the impossibly brutal Podsnap, Fascination Fledgeby, and the Lammles, a couple which suggests nothing but antimony and the Chamber of Horrors? Caricature such as this, representing no society that has ever in any part of the world pretended to be "good," corresponds to the wild rhetoric of the superfluous Betty Higden episode against the "gospel according to Podsnappery"; but it is, in truth, satire from which both wit and humour have gone out. An angry, often almost spasmodic, mannerism has to supply their place. Among the personages moving in "society" are two which, as playing serious parts in the progress of the plot, the author is necessarily obliged to seek to endow with the flesh and blood of real human beings. Yet it is precisely in these—the friends Eugene and Mortimer—that, in the earlier part of the novel at all events, the constraint of the author's style seems least relieved; the dialogues between these two Templars have an unnaturalness about them as intolerable as euphuism or the effeminacies of the Augustan age. It is true that, when the story reaches its tragic height, the character of Eugene is borne along with it, and his affectations are forgotten. But in previous parts of the book, where he poses as a wit, and is evidently meant for a gentleman, he fails to make good his claims to either character. Even the skilfully contrived contrast between the rivals Eugene Wrayburn and the school-master Bradley Headstone—through whom and through whose pupil, Dickens, by the way, dealt another blow against a system of mental training founded upon facts alone—fails to bring out the conception of Eugene which the author manifestly had in his mind. Lastly, the old way of reconciling dissonances—a marriage which "society" calls a *mésalliance*—has rarely furnished a lamer ending than here; and, had the unwritten laws of

English popular fiction permitted, a tragic close would have better accorded with the sombre hue of the most powerful portions of this curiously unequal romance.

The effort—for such it was—of "Our Mutual Friend" had not been over for more than a few months, when Dickens accepted a proposal for thirty nights' readings from the Messrs. Chappell; and by April, 1866, he was again hard at work, flying across the country into Lancashire and Scotland, and back to his temporary London residence in Southwick Place, Hyde Park. In any man more capable than Dickens of controlling the restlessness which consumed him, the acceptance of this offer would have been incomprehensible; for his heart had been declared out of order by his physician, and the patient had shown himself in some degree awake to the significance of this opinion. But the readings were begun and accomplished notwithstanding, though not without warnings, on which he insisted on putting his own interpretation. Sleeplessness aggravated fatigue, and stimulants were already necessary to enable him to do the work of his readings without discomfort. Meanwhile, some weeks before they were finished, he had been induced to enter into negotiations about a further engagement to begin at the end of the year. Time was to be left for the Christmas Number, which this year could hardly find its scene anywhere else than at a railway junction; and the readings were not to extend over forty nights, which seem ultimately to have been increased to fifty. This second series, which included a campaign in Ireland—brilliantly successful despite snow and rain, and Fenians—was over in May. Then came the climax, for America now claimed her share of the great author for her public halls and chapels and lecture-theatres; and the question of the summer and autumn was whether or not to follow the sound of the distant dollar. It was closely debated between Dickens and his friend Forster and Wills, and he describes himself as "tempest-tossed" with doubts; but his mind had inclined in one direction from the first, and the matter was virtually decided when he resolved to send a confidential agent to make inquiries on the spot. Little imported another and grave attack in his foot; the trusty Mr. Dolby's report was irresistible. Eighty readings within half a year was the estimated number, with profits amounting

to over fifteen thousand pounds. The gains actually made were nearly five thousand pounds in excess of this calculation.

A farewell banquet, under the presidency of Lord Lytton, gave the favourite author Godspeed on his journey to the larger half of his public; on the 9th of November he sailed from Liverpool, and on the 19th landed at Boston. The voyage, on which, with his old buoyancy, he had contrived to make himself master of the modest revels of the saloon, seems to have done him good, or at least to have made him, as usual, impatient to be at his task. Barely arrived, he is found reporting himself "so well, that I am constantly chafing at not having begun to-night, instead of this night week." By December, however, he was at his reading-desk, first at Boston, where he met with the warmest of welcomes, and then at New York, where there was a run upon the tickets, which he described with his usual excited delight. The enthusiasm of his reception by the American public must have been heightened by the thought that it was now or never for them to see him face to face, and, bygones being bygones, to testify to him their admiration. But there may have been some foundation for his discovery that some signs of agitation on his part were expected in return, and "that it would have been taken as a suitable compliment if I would stagger on the platform, and instantly drop, overpowered by the spectacle before me." It was but a sad Christmas which he spent with his faithful Dolby at their New York inn, tired, and with a "genuine American catarrh upon him," of which he never freed himself during his stay in the country. Hardly had he left the doctor's hands, than he was about again, reading in Boston and New York and their more immediate neighbourhood—that is within six or seven hours by railway—till February; and then, in order to stimulate his public, beginning a series of appearances at more distant places before returning to his starting-points. His whole tour included, besides a number of New England towns, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, and in the north Cleveland and Buffalo. Canada and the West were struck out of the programme, the latter chiefly because exciting political matters were beginning to absorb public attention.

During these journeyings Dickens gave himself up alto-

gether to the business of his readings, only occasionally allowing himself to accept the hospitality proffered him on every side. Thus only could he breast the difficulties of his enterprise; for, as I have said, his health was never good during the whole of his visit, and his exertions were severe, though eased by the self-devotion of his attendants, of which, as of his constant kindness, both serious and sportive, towards them, it is touching to read. Already in January, he describes himself as not seldom "so dead beat" at the close of a reading "that they lay me down on a sofa, after I have been washed and dressed, and I lie there, extremely faint, for a quarter of an hour," and as suffering from intolerable sleeplessness at night. His appetite was equally disordered, and he lived mainly on stimulants. Why had he condemned himself to such a life?

When at last he could declare the stress of his work over, he described himself as "nearly used up. Climate, distance, catarrh, travelling, and hard work, have begun —I may say so, now they are nearly all over—to tell heavily upon me. Sleeplessness besets me; and if I had engaged to go on into May, I think I must have broken down." Indeed, but for his wonderful energy and the feeling of exultation which is derived from a heavy task nearly accomplished, he would have had to follow the advice of "Longfellow and all the Cambridge men," and give in nearly at the last. But he persevered through the farewell readings, both at Boston and at New York, though on the night before the last reading in America, he told Dolby that if he "had to read but twice more, instead of once, he couldn't do it." This last reading of all was given at New York on April 20th, two days after a farewell banquet at Delmonico's. It was when speaking on this occasion that, very naturally moved by the unalloyed welcome which had greeted him in whatever part of the States he had visited, he made the declaration, promising to perpetuate his grateful sense of his recent American experiences. This apology, which was no apology, at least remains one among many proofs of the fact, that with Dickens kindness never fell on a thankless soil.

The merry month of May was still young in the Kentish fields and lanes when the master of Gadshill Place was

home again at last. "I had not been at sea three days on the passage home," he wrote to his friend Mrs. Watson, "when I became myself again." It was, however, too much, when "a 'deputation'—two in number, of whom only one could get into my cabin, while the other looked in at my window—came to ask me to read to the passengers that evening in the saloon. I respectfully replied that sooner than do it I would assault the captain and be put in irons." Alas! he was already fast bound, by an engagement concluded soon after he had arrived in Boston, to a final series of readings at home. "Farewell" is a difficult word to say for any one who has grown accustomed to the stimulating excitement of a public stage, and it is not wonderful that Dickens should have wished to see the faces of his familiar friends—the English public—once more. But the engagement to which he had set his hand was for a farewell of a hundred readings, at the recompense of eight thousand pounds, in addition to expenses and percentage. It is true that he had done this before he had fully realised the effect of his American exertions; but even so, there was a terrible unwisdom in the promise. These last readings—and he alone is, in common fairness, to be held responsible for the fact—cut short a life from which much noble fruit might still have been expected for our literature, and which in any case might have been prolonged as a blessing beyond all that gold can buy to those who loved him.

Meanwhile, he had allowed himself a short respite, before resuming his labours in October. It was not more, his friends thought, than he needed, for much of his old buoyancy seemed to them to be wanting in him, except when hospitality or the intercourse of friendship called it forth. What a charm there still was in his genial humour his letters would suffice to show. It does one good to read his description to his kind American friends Mr. and Mrs. Fields of his tranquillity at Gadshill: "Divers birds sing here all day, and the nightingales all night. The place is lovely, and in perfect order. I have put five mirrors in the Swiss chalet where I write, and they reflect and refract in all kinds of ways the leaves that are quivering at the windows, and the great fields of waving corn, and the sail-dotted river. My room is up among the branches of the trees, and the birds and the butterflies

fly in and out, and the green branches shoot in at the open windows, and the lights and shadows of the clouds come and go with the rest of the company. The scent of the flowers, and indeed of everything that is growing for miles and miles, is most delicious."

Part of this rare leisure he generously devoted to the preparation for the press of a volume of literary remains from the pen of an old friend. The "Religious Opinions of Chauncey Hare Townshend" should not be altogether overlooked by those interested in Dickens, to whom the loose undogmatic theology of his friend commended itself as readily as the sincere religious feeling underlying it. I cannot say what answer Dickens would have returned to an inquiry as to his creed, but the nature of his religious opinions is obvious enough. Born in the Church of England, he had so strong an aversion from what seemed to him dogmatism of any kind, that he for a time—in 1843—connected himself with a Unitarian congregation; and to Unitarian views his own probably continued during his life most nearly to approach. He described himself as "morally wide asunder from Rome," but the religious conceptions of her community cannot have been a matter of anxious inquiry with him, while he was too liberal-minded to be, unless occasionally, aggressive in his Protestantism. For the rest, his mind, though imaginative, was without mystical tendencies, while for the transitory superstitions of the day it was impossible but that he should entertain the contempt which they deserved; "although," he writes, "I regard with a hushed and solemn fear, the mysteries, between which, and this state of existence, is interposed the barrier of the great trial and change that fall on all the things that live; and, although I have not the audacity to pretend that I know anything of them, I cannot reconcile the mere banging of doors, ringing of bells, creaking of boards, and such like insignificances, with the majestic beauty and pervading analogy of all the Divine rules that I am permitted to understand."

His piety was undemonstrative and sincere, as his books alone would suffice to prove; and he seems to have sought to impress upon his children those religious truths with the acceptance and practice of which he remained himself content. He loved the New Testament, and had, after

some fashion of his own, paraphrased the Gospel narrative for the use of his children; but he thought that "half the misery and hypocrisy of the Christian world arises from a stubborn determination to refuse the New Testament as a sufficient guide in itself, and to force the Old Testament into alliance with it—whereof comes all manner of camel-swallowing and of gnat-straining." Of Puritanism in its modern forms he was an uncompromising, and no doubt a conscientious, opponent; and though, with perfect sincerity, he repelled the charge that his attacks upon cant were attacks upon religion, yet their *animus* is such as to make the misinterpretation intelligible. His dissenting ministers are of the "Bartholomew Fair" species, and though, in his later books, a good clergyman here and there makes his modest appearance, the balance can hardly be said to be satisfactorily redressed.

The performance of this pious office was not the only kind act he did after his return from America. Of course, however, his own family was nearest to his heart. No kinder or more judicious words were ever addressed by a father to his children than those which, about this time, he wrote to one of his sons, then beginning a successful career at Cambridge, and to another—the youngest—who was setting forth for Australia, to join an elder brother already established in that country. "Poor Plorn," he afterwards wrote, "is gone to Australia. It was a hard parting at the last. He seemed to me to become once more my youngest and favourite child as the day drew near, and I did not think I could have been so shaken."

In October his "farewell" readings began. He had never had his heart more in the work than now. Curiously enough, not less than two proposals had reached him during this autumn—one from Birmingham and the other from Edinburgh—that he should allow himself to be put forward as a candidate for Parliament; but he declined to entertain either, though in at least one of the two cases the prospects of success would not have been small. His views of political and parliamentary life had not changed since he had written to Bulwer Lytton in 1865: "Would there not seem to be something horribly rotten in the system of political life, when one stands amazed how any man, not forced into it by his position, as you are, can bear to live it?" Indeed, they had hardly changed since

the days when he had come into personal contact with them as a reporter. In public and in private he had never ceased to ridicule our English system of party, and to express his contempt for the Legislature and all its works. He had, however, continued to take a lively interest in public affairs, and his letters contain not a few shrewd remarks on both home and foreign questions. Like most liberal minds of his age, he felt a warm sympathy for the cause of Italy; and the English statesman whom he appears to have most warmly admired was Lord Russell, in whose good intentions neither friends nor adversaries were wont to lose faith. Meanwhile, his radicalism gradually became of the most thoroughly independent type, though it interfered neither with his approval of the proceedings in Jamaica as an example of strong government, nor with his scorn of "the meeting of jawbones and asses," held against Governor Eyre at Manchester. The political questions, however, which really moved him deeply were those social problems to which his sympathy for the poor had always directed his attention: the poor law, temperance, Sunday observance, punishment and prisons, labour and strikes. On all these heads sentiment guided his judgment, but he spared no pains to convince himself that he was in the right: and he was always generous, as when, notwithstanding his interest in "Household Words," he declared himself unable to advocate the repeal of the paper duty for a moment, "as against the soap duty, or any other pressing on the mass of the poor."

Thus he found no difficulty in adhering to the course he had marked out for himself. The subject which now occupied him before all others was a scheme for a new reading, with which it was his wish to vary and to intensify the success of the series on which he was engaged. This was no other than a selection of scenes from "Oliver Twist," culminating in the scene of the murder of Nancy by Sikes, which, before producing it in public, he resolved to "try" upon a select private audience. The trial was a brilliant success; "the public," exclaimed a famous actress who was present, "have been looking out for a sensation these last fifty years or so, and, by heaven, they have got it!" Accordingly, from January, 1869, it formed one of the most frequent of his readings, and the effort which it involved counted for much in the collapse

which was to follow. Never were the limits between reading and acting more thoroughly effaced by Dickens, and never was the production of an extraordinary effect more equally shared by author and actor. But few who witnessed this extraordinary performance can have guessed the elaborate preparation bestowed upon it, which is evident from the following notes (by Mr. C. Kent) on the book used in it by the reader:

"What is as striking as anything in all this reading, however—that is, in the reading copy of it now lying before us as we write—is the mass of hints as to the byplay in the stage directions for himself, so to speak, scattered up and down the margin. 'Fagin raised his right hand, and shook his trembling forefinger in the air,' is there on page 101 in print. Beside it, on the margin in MS., is the word '*Action.*' Not a word of it was said. It was simply *done*. Again, immediately below that, on the same page—Sikes *loquitur*: 'Oh! you haven't, haven't you?' passing a pistol into a more convenient pocket ('*Action*' again in MS. on the margin). Not a word was said about the pistol. . . . So again, afterwards, as a rousing self-direction, one sees notified in MS. on page 107, the grim stage direction, '*Murder coming!*'"

The "Murder" was frequently read by Dickens not less than four times a week during the early months of 1869, in which year, after beginning in Ireland, he had been continually travelling to and fro between various parts of Great Britain and town. Already in February the old trouble in his foot had made itself felt, but, as usual, it had long been disregarded. On the 10th of April he had been entertained at Liverpool, in St. George's Hall, at a banquet presided over by Lord Dufferin, and in a genial speech had tossed back the ball to Lord Houghton, who had pleasantly bantered him for his unconsciousness of the merits of the House of Lords. Ten days afterwards, he was to read at Preston, but, feeling uneasy about himself, had reported his symptoms to his doctor in London. The latter hastened down to Preston, and persuaded Dickens to accompany him back to town, where, after a consultation, it was determined that the readings must be stopped for the current year, and that reading combined with travelling must never be resumed. What his sister-in-law and daughter feel themselves justi-

fied in calling "the beginning of the end" had come at last.

With his usual presence of mind, Dickens at once perceived the imperative necessity of interposing "as it were, a fly-leaf in the book of my life, in which nothing should be written from without for a brief season of a few weeks." But he insisted that the combination of the reading and the travelling was alone to be held accountable for his having found himself feeling, "for the first time in my life, giddy, jarred, shaken, faint, uncertain of voice and sight and tread and touch, and dull of spirit." Meanwhile he for once kept quiet, first in London, and then at Gadshill. "This last summer," say those who did most to make it bright for him, "was a very happy one," and gladdened by the visits of many friends. On the retirement, also on account of ill-health, from "All the Year Round," of his second self, W. H. Wills, he was fortunately able at once to supply the vacant place by the appointment to it of his eldest son, who seems to have inherited that sense of lucid order which was among his father's most distinctive characteristics. He travelled very little this year, though in September he made a speech at Birmingham on behalf of his favourite Midland Institute, delivering himself, at its conclusion, of an antithetical radical commonplace, which, being misreported or misunderstood, was commented upon with much unnecessary wonderment. With a view to avoiding the danger of excessive fatigue, the latter part of the year was chiefly devoted to writing in advance part of his new book, which, like "Great Expectations," was to grow up, and to be better for growing up, in his own Kentish home, and almost within sound of the bells of "Cloisterham" Cathedral. But the new book was never to be finished.

The first number of "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" was not published till one more short series of twelve readings, given in London during a period extending from January to March, was at an end. He had obtained Sir Thomas Watson's consent to his carrying out this wish, largely caused by the desire to compensate the Messrs. Chappell in some measure for the disappointment to which he had been obliged to subject them by the interruption of his longer engagement. Thus, though the Christmas of 1869 had brought with it another warning of trouble in

the foot, the year 1870 opened busily, and early in January Dickens established himself for the season at 5, Hyde Park Place. Early in the month he made another speech at Birmingham; but the readings were strictly confined to London. On the other hand, it was not to be expected that the "Murder" would be excluded from the list. It was read in January, to an audience of actors and actresses; and it is pleasant to think that he was able to testify to his kindly feeling towards their profession on one of the last occasions when he appeared on his own stage. "I set myself," he wrote, "to carrying out of themselves and their observation, those who were bent on watching how the effects were got, and, I believe, I succeeded. Coming back to it again, however, I feel it was madness ever to do it so continuously. My ordinary pulse is seventy-two, and it runs up under this effort to one hundred and twelve." Yet this fatal reading was repeated thrice more before the series closed, and with even more startling results upon the reader. The careful observations made by his physician, however, show that the excitement of the last readings was altogether too great for any man to have endured much longer. At last, on March 16th, the night came which closed fifteen years of personal relations between the English public and its favourite author, such as are, after all, unparalleled in the history of our literature. His farewell words were few and simple; and referred with dignity to his resolution to devote himself henceforth exclusively to his calling as an author, and to his hope that in but two short weeks' time his audience "might enter, in their own homes, on a new series of readings at which his assistance would be indispensable."

Of the short time which remained to him his last book was the chief occupation; and an association thus clings to "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" which would, in any case, incline us to treat this fragment—for it was to be no more—with tenderness. One would, indeed, hardly be justified in asserting that this story, like that which Thackeray left behind him in the same unfinished state, bade fair to become a masterpiece in its author's later manner; there is much that is forced in its humour, while as to the working out of the chief characters our means of judgment are, of course, incomplete. The outline of the

design, on the other hand, presents itself with tolerable clearness to the minds of most readers of insight or experience, though the story deserves its name of a mystery, instead of, like "Our Mutual Friend," seeming merely to withhold a necessary explanation. And it must be allowed that few plots have ever been more effectively laid than this, of which the untying will never be known. Three such personages in relation to a deed of darkness as Jasper for its contriver, Durden for its unconscious accomplice, and Deputy for its self-invited witness, and all so naturally connecting themselves with the locality of the perpetration of the crime, assuredly could not have been brought together, except by one who had gradually attained to mastership in the adaptation of characters to the purposes of a plot. Still, the strongest impression left upon the reader of this fragment, is the evidence it furnishes of Dickens having retained to the last powers which were most peculiarly and distinctively his own. Having skilfully brought into connection, for the purposes of his plot, two such strangely-contrasted spheres of life and death, as the cathedral close at "Cloisterham" and an opium-smoking den in one of the obscurest corners of London, he is enabled, by his imaginative and observing powers, not only to *realise* the picturesque elements in both scenes, but also to convert them into a twofold background, accommodating itself to the most vivid hues of human passion. This is to bring out what he was wont to call "the romantic aspect of familiar things." With the physiognomy of Cloisterham—otherwise Rochester—with its Cathedral, and its "monastery" ruin, and its "Minor Canon Corner," and its "Nuns' House"—otherwise "Eastgate House," in the High Street—he was, of course, closely acquainted; but he had never reproduced its features with so artistic a cunning, and the Mystery of Edwin Drood will always haunt Bishop Gundulph's venerable building and its tranquil precincts. As for the opium-smoking, we have his own statement, that what he described he saw—"exactly as he had described it, penny ink-bottle and all—down in Shadwell" in the autumn of 1869. "A couple of the Inspectors of Lodging-houses knew the woman, and took me to her as I was making a round with them, to see for myself the working of Lord Shaftesbury's Bill." Between these scenes, John Jasper—a figure

conceived with singular force—moves to and fro, preparing his mysterious design. No story of the kind ever began more finely; and we may be excused from inquiring whether signs of diminished vigour of invention and freshness of execution are to be found in other and less prominent portions of the great novelist's last work. . . .

CHAPTER VII.

THE FUTURE OF DICKENS'S FAME.

THERE is no reason whatever to believe that in the years which have gone by since Dickens's death the delight taken in his works throughout England and North America, as well as elsewhere, has diminished, or that he is not still one of our few most popular writers. The mere fact that his popularity has remained such since he, like a beam of spring sunshine, first made the world gay, is a sufficient indication of the influence which he must have exercised upon his age. In our world of letters his followers have been many, though naturally enough those whose original genius impelled them to follow their own course soonest ceased to be his imitators. Among these I know no more signal instance than the great novelist whose surpassing merits he had very swiftly recognised in her earliest work. For though in the "Scenes of Clerical Life" George Eliot seems to be, as it were, hesitating between Dickens and Thackeray as the models of her humorous writing, reminiscences of the former are unmistakable in the opening of "Amos Barton," in "Mr. Gilfil's Love-Story," in "Janet's Repentance"; and though it would be hazardous to trace his influence in the domestic scenes in "Adam Bede," neither a Christmas exordium in one of the books of "The Mill on the Floss," nor the Sam Weller-like freshness of Bob Jakin in the same powerful story, is altogether the author's own. Two of the most successful continental novelists of the present day have gone to school with Dickens: the one the truly national writer whose "Debit and Credit," a work largely in the manner of his English model, has, as a picture of

modern life, remained unexcelled in German literature; * the other, the brilliant Southerner, who may write as much of the "History of his Books" as his public may desire to learn, but who cannot write the pathos of Dickens altogether out of "Jack," or his farcical fun out of "Le Nabab." And again—for I am merely illustrating, not attempting to describe, the literary influence of Dickens—who could fail to trace in the Californian studies and sketches of Bret Harte elements of humour and of pathos, to which that genuinely original author would be the last to deny that his great English "Master" was no stranger?

Yet popularity and literary influence, however wide and however strong, often pass away as they have come; and in no field of literature are there many reputations which the sea of time fails before very long to submerge. In prose fiction—a comparatively young literary growth—they are certainly not the most numerous, perhaps because on works of this species the manners and style of an age most readily impress themselves, rendering them proportionately strange to the ages that come after. In the works of even the lesser playwrights who pleased the liberal times of Elizabeth, and in lyrics of even secondary merit that were admired by fantastic Caroline Cavaliers, we can still take pleasure. But who can read many of the "standard" novels published as lately even as the days of George the Fourth? The speculation is, therefore, not altogether idle, whether Dickens saw truly when labouring, as most great men do labour, in the belief that his work was not only for a day. Literary eminence was the only eminence he desired, while it was one of the very healthiest elements in his character, that whatever he was, he was thoroughly. He would not have told any one, as Fielding's author told Mr. Booth at the sponging-house, that romance-writing "is certainly the easiest work in the world"; nor being what he was, could he ever have found it such in his own case. "Whoever," he declared, "is devoted to an art must be content to give himself wholly up to it, and to find his recompense in it." And not only did he obey his own labour-laws, but in the

* In the last volume of his *magnum opus* of historical fiction, Gustav Freytag describes "Boz" as, about the year 1846, filling with boundless enthusiasm the hearts of young men and maidens in a small Silesian country town.

details of his work as a man of letters he spared no pains and no exercise of self-control. "I am," he generously told a beginner, to whom he was counselling patient endeavour, "an impatient and impulsive person myself, but it has been for many years the constant effort of my life to practise at my desk what I preach to you." Never, therefore, has a man of letters had a better claim to be judged by his works. As he expressly said in his will, he wished for no other monument than his writings; and with their aid we, who already belong to a new generation, and whose children will care nothing for the gossip and the scandal of which he, like most popular celebrities, was in his lifetime privileged or doomed to become the theme, may seek to form some definite conception of his future place among illustrious Englishmen.

It would, of course, be against all experience to suppose that to future generations Dickens, as a writer, will be all that he was to his own. Much that constitutes the subject, or at least furnishes the background, of his pictures of English life, like the Fleet Prison and the Marshalsea, has vanished, or is being improved off the face of the land. The form, again, of Dickens's principal works may become obsolete, as it was in a sense accidental. He was the most popular novelist of his day; but should prose fiction, or even the full and florid species of it which has enjoyed so long-lived a favour ever be out of season, the popularity of Dickens's books must experience an inevitable diminution. And even before that day arrives, not all the works in a particular species of literature that may to a particular age have seemed destined to live, will have been preserved. Nothing is more surely tested by time than that originality which is the secret of a writer's continuing to be famous, and continuing to be read.

Dickens was not—and to whom in these latter ages of literature could such a term be applied?—a self-made writer, in the sense that he owed nothing to those who had gone before him. He was most assuredly no classical scholar—how could he have been? But I should hesitate to call him an ill-read man, though he certainly was neither a great nor a catholic reader, and though he could not help thinking about "Nicholas Nickleby" while he was reading "The Curse of Kehama." In his own branch of literature his judgment was sound and sure-footed. It was, of course,

a happy accident, that as a boy he imbibed that taste for good fiction which is a thing inconceivable to the illiterate. Sneers have been directed against the poverty of his bookshelves in his earlier days of authorship; but I fancy there were not many popular novelists in 1839 who would have taken down with them into the country for a summer sojourn, as Dickens did to Petersham, not only a couple of Scott's novels, but Goldsmith, Swift, Fielding, Smollett, and the British Essayists; nor is there one of these national classics—unless it be Swift—with whom Dickens's books or letters fail to show him to have been familiar. Of Goldsmith's books, he told Forster, in a letter which the biographer of Goldsmith modestly suppressed, he "had no indifferent perception—to the best of his remembrance—when little more than a child." He discusses with understanding the relative literary merits of the serious and humorous papers in the "Spectator"; and, with regard to another work of unique significance in the history of English fiction, "Robinson Crusoe," he acutely observed that "one of the most popular books on earth has nothing in it to make anyone laugh or cry." "It is a book," he added, which he "read very much." It may be noted, by the way, that he was an attentive and judicious student of Hogarth; and that thus his criticisms of humorous pictorial art rested upon as broad a basis of comparison as did his judgment of his great predecessors in English humorous fiction.

Among these predecessors it has become usual to assert that Smollett exercised the greatest influence upon Dickens. It is no doubt true that in David Copperfield's library Smollett's books are mentioned first, and in the greatest number, that a vision of Roderick Random and Strap haunted the very wicket-gate at Blunderstone, that the poor little hero's first thought on entering the King's Bench prison was the strange company whom Roderick met in the Marshalsea; and that the references to Smollett and his books are frequent in Dickens's other books and in his letters. Leghorn seemed to him "made illustrious" by Smollett's grave, and in a late period of his life he criticises his chief fictions with admirable justice. "'Humphrey Clinker,'" he writes, "is certainly Smollett's best. I am rather divided between 'Peregrine Pickle' and 'Roderick Random,' both extraordinarily good in their

way, which is a way without tenderness; but you will have to read them both, and I send the first volume of 'Peregrine' as the richer of the two." An odd volume of "Peregrine" was one of the books with which the waiter at the "Holly Tree Inn" endeavoured to beguile the lonely Christmas of the snowed-up traveller, but the latter "knew every word of it already." In the "Lazy Tour," "Thomas, now just able to grope his way along, in a doubled-up condition, was no bad embodiment of Commodore Trunnion." I have noted, moreover, coincidences of detail which bear witness to Dickens's familiarity with Smollett's works. To Lieutenant Bowling and Commodore Trunnion, as to Captain Cuttle, every man was a "brother," and to the Commodore, as to Mr. Smallweed, the most abusive substantive addressed to a woman admitted of intensification by the epithet "brimstone." I think Dickens had not forgotten the opening of the "Adventures of an Atom" when he wrote a passage in the opening of his own "Christmas Carol"; and that the characters of Tom Pinch and Tommy Traddles—the former more especially—were not conceived without some thought of honest Strap. Furthermore, it was Smollett's example that probably suggested to Dickens the attractive jingle in the title of his "Nicholas Nickleby." But these are for the most part mere details. The manner of Dickens as a whole resembles Fielding's more strikingly than Smollett's, as it was only natural that it should. The irony of Smollett is drier than was reconcilable with Dickens's nature; it is only in the occasional extravagances of his humour that the former anticipates anything in the latter, and it is only the coarsest scenes of Dickens's earlier books—such as that between Noah, Charlotte, and Mrs. Sowerberry in "Oliver Twist"—which recall the whole manner of his predecessor. They resemble one another in their descriptive accuracy, and in the accumulation of detail by which they produce instead of obscuring vividness of impression; but it was impossible that Dickens should prefer the general method of the novel of adventure pure and simple, such as Smollett produced after the example of "Gil Blas," to the less crude form adopted by Fielding, who adhered to earlier and nobler models. With Fielding's, moreover, Dickens's whole nature was congenial; they both had that tenderness which Smollett

lacked; and the circumstance that of all English writers of the past, Fielding's name alone was given by Dickens to one of his sons, shows how, like so many of Fielding's readers, he had learnt to love him with an almost personal affection. The very spirit of the author of "Tom Jones"—that gaiety which, to borrow the saying of a recent historian concerning Cervantes, renders even brutality agreeable, and that charm of sympathetic feeling which makes us love those of his characters which he loves himself—seem astir in some of the most delightful passages of Dickens's most delightful books. So in "Pickwick," to begin with, in which, by the way, Fielding is cited with a twinkle of the eye all his own, and in "Martin Chuzzlewit," where a chapter opens with a passage which is pure Fielding:

"It was morning, and the beautiful Aurora, of whom, so much hath been written, said, and sung, did, with her rosy fingers, nip and tweak Miss Pecksniff's nose. It was the frolicsome custom of the goddess, in her intercourse with the fair Cherry, to do so; or in more prosaic phrase, the tip of that feature in the sweet girl's countenance was always very red at breakfast-time."

Among the writers of Dickens's own age there were only two, or perhaps three, who in very different degrees and ways, exercised a noticeable influence upon his writings. He once declared to Washington Irving that he kept everything written by that delightful author upon "his shelves, and in his thoughts, and in his heart of hearts." And, doubtless, in Dickens's early days as an author the influence of the American classic may have aided to stimulate the imaginative element in his English admirer's genius, and to preserve him from a grossness of humour into which, after the "Sketches by Boz," he very rarely allowed himself to lapse. The two other writers were Carlyle, and, as I have frequently noted in previous chapters, the friend and fellow-labourer of Dickens's later manhood, Wilkie Collins. It is no unique experience that the disciple should influence the master; and in this instance, perhaps with the co-operation of the examples of the modern French theatre, which the two friends had studied in common, Wilkie Collins's manner had, I think, no small share in bringing about a transformation in that of Dickens. His stories thus gradually lost all traces of

the older masters both in general method and in detail; while he came to condense and concentrate his effects in successions of skilfully arranged scenes. Dickens's debt to Carlyle was, of course, of another nature; and in his works the proofs are not few of his readiness to accept the teachings of one whom he declared he would "go at all times farther to see than any man alive." There was something singular in the admiration these two men felt for one another; for Carlyle, after an acquaintance of almost thirty years, spoke of Dickens as "a most cordial, sincere, clear-sighted, quietly decisive, just, and loving man"; and there is not one of these epithets but seems well considered and well chosen. But neither Carlyle nor Dickens possessed a moral quality omitted in this list, the quality of patience, which abhors either "quietly" or loudly "deciding" a question before considering it under all its aspects, and in a spirit of fairness to all sides. The "Latter-Day Pamphlets," to confine myself to them,* like so much of the political philosophy, if it is to be dignified by that name, which in part Dickens derived from them, were at the time effective strokes of satirical invective; now, their edge seems blunt and their energy inflation. Take the pamphlet on "Model Prisons," with its summary of a theory which Dickens sought in every way to enforce upon his readers; or again, that entitled "Downing Street," which settles the question of party government as a question of the choice between Buffy and Boodle, or, according to Carlyle, the Honourable Felix Parvulus and the Right Honourable Felicissimus Zero. The corrosive power of such sarcasms may be unquestionable; but the angry rhetoric pointed by them becomes part of the nature of those who habitually employ its utterance in lieu of argument; and not a little of the declamatory element in Dickens, which no doubt at first exercised its effect upon a large number of readers, must be ascribed to his reading of a great writer, who was often very much more stimulative than nutritious.

Something, then, he owed to other writers, but it was

* The passage in "Oliver Twist" (chapter XXXVII.) which illustrates the maxim that "dignity, and even holiness too, sometimes are more questions of coat and waistcoat than some people imagine," may, or may not, be a reminiscence of "Sartor Resartus," then (1838) first published in a volume.

little indeed in comparison with what he owed to his natural gifts. First among these, I think, must be placed what may, in a word, be called his sensibility—that quality of which humour, in the more limited sense of the word, and pathos are the twin products. And in Dickens both these were paramount powers, almost equally various in their forms and effective in their operation. According to M. Taine, Dickens, while he excels in irony of a particular sort, being an Englishman, is incapable of being gay. Such profundities are unfathomable to the readers of "Pickwick"; though the French critic may have generalised from Dickens's later writings only. His pathos is not less true than various, for the gradations are marked between the stern tragic pathos of "Hard Times," the melting pathos of "The Old Curiosity Shop," "Dombey and Son," and "David Copperfield," and the pathos of helplessness which appeals to us in Smike and Jo. But this sensibility would not have given us Dickens's gallery of living pictures, had it not been for the powers of imagination and observation which enabled him spontaneously to exercise it in countless directions. To the way in which his imagination enabled him to identify himself with the figments of his own brain he frequently testified; Dante was not more certain in his celestial and infernal topography than was Dickens as to "every stair in the little midshipman's house," and as to "every young gentleman's bedstead in Dr. Blimber's establishment." One particular class of phenomena may be instanced instead of many, in the observation and poetic reproduction of which his singular natural endowment continually manifested itself—I mean those of the weather. It is not, indeed, often that he rises to a fine image like that in the description of the night in which Ralph Nickleby, ruined and crushed, slinks home to his death.

"The night was dark, and a cold wind blew, driving the clouds furiously and fast before it. There was one black gloomy mass that seemed to follow him: not hurrying in the wild chase with the others, but lingering sullenly behind, and gliding darkly and stealthily on. He often looked back at this, and, more than once, stopped to let it pass over; but, somehow, when he went forward again, it was still behind him, coming mournfully and slowly up, like a shadowy funeral train."

But he again and again enables us to feel, as if the Christmas morning on which Mr. Pickwick ran gaily down the slide, or as if the "very quiet" moonlit night in the midst of which a sudden sound, like the firing of a gun or a pistol, startled the repose of Lincoln's Inn Fields, were not only what we have often precisely experienced in country villages or in London squares, but as if they were the very morning and the very night which we *must* experience, if we were feeling the glow of wintry merriment, or the awful chill of the presentiment of evil in a dead hour. In its lower form this combination of the powers of imagination and observation has the rapidity of wit, and, indeed, sometimes *is* wit. The gift of suddenly finding out what a man, a thing, a combination of man and thing, is like—this, too, comes by nature; and there is something electrifying in its sudden exercise, even on the most trivial occasions, as when Flora, delighted with Little Dorrit's sudden rise to fortune, requests to know all "about the good, dear, quiet little thing, and all the changes of her fortunes, carriage people now, no doubt, and horses without number most romantic, a coat of arms of course, and wild beasts on their hind legs, showing it as if it was a copy they had done with mouths from ear to ear, good gracious!" But nature, when she gifted Dickens with sensibility, observation, and imagination, had bestowed upon him yet another boon in the quality which seems more prominent than any other in his whole being. The vigour of Dickens—a mental and moral vigour supported by a splendid physical organism—was the parent of some of his foibles; among the rest, of his tendency to exaggeration. No fault has been more frequently found with his workmanship than this; nor can he be said to have defended himself very successfully on this head when he declared that he did "not recollect ever to have heard or seen the charge of exaggeration made against a feeble performance, though, in its feebleness, it may have been most untrue." But without this vigour he could not have been creative as he was; and in him there were accordingly united with rare completeness, a swift responsiveness to the impulses of humour and pathos, an inexhaustible fertility in discovering and inventing materials for their exercise, and the constant creative desire to give to these newly-created materials a vivid plastic form.

And the mention of this last-named gift in Dickens suggests the query whether, finally, there is anything in his *manner* as a writer which may prevent the continuance of his extraordinary popularity. No writer can be great without a manner of his own; and that Dickens had such a manner his most supercilious censurer will readily allow. His terse narrative power, often intensely humorous in its unblushing and unwinking gravity, and often deeply pathetic in its simplicity, is as characteristic of his manner as is the supreme felicity of phrase in which he has no equal. As to the latter, I should hardly know where to begin and where to leave off were I to attempt to illustrate it. But, to take two instances of different kinds of wit, I may cite a passage in Guster's narrative of her interview with Lady Dedlock: "And so I took the letter from her, and she said she had nothing to give me; and *I said I was poor myself, and consequently wanted nothing*"; and, of a different kind, the account in one of his letters of a conversation with Macready, in which the great tragedian, after a solemn but impassioned commendation of his friend's reading, "put his hand upon my breast and pulled out his pocket-handkerchief, and *I felt as if I were doing somebody to his Werner.*" These, I think, were among the most characteristic merits of his style. It also, and more especially in his later years, had its characteristic faults. The danger of degenerating into mannerism is incident to every original manner. There is mannerism in most of the great English prose-writers of Dickens's age —in Carlyle, in Macaulay, in Thackeray—but in none of them is there more mannerism than in Dickens himself. In his earlier writings, in "Nicholas Nickleby," for instance (I do not, of course, refer to the Portsmouth boards), and even in "Martin Chuzzlewit," there is much staginess; but in his later works his own mannerism had swallowed up that of the stage, and, more especially in serious passages, his style had become what M. Taine happily characterises as *le style tourmenté.* His choice of words remained throughout excellent, and his construction of sentences clear. He told Wilkie Collins that "underlining was not his nature"; and in truth he had no need to emphasise his expressions, or to bid the reader "go back upon their meaning." He recognised his responsibility, as a popular writer, in keeping the vocabulary of the

language pure; and in "Little Dorrit" he even solemnly declines to use the French word *trousseau*. In his orthography, on the other hand, he was not free from Americanisms; and his interpunctuation was consistently odd. But these are trifles; his more important mannerisms were, like many really dangerous faults of style, only the excess of characteristic excellences. Thus it was he who elaborated with unprecedented effect, that humorous species of paraphrase which, as one of the most imitable devices of his style, has also been the most persistently imitated. We are all tickled when Grip, the raven, "issues orders for the instant preparation of innumerable kettles for purposes of tea"; or when Mr. Pecksniff's eye is "piously upraised, with something of that expression which the poetry of ages has attributed to a domestic bird, when breathing its last amid the ravages of an electric storm"; but in the end the device becomes a mere trick of circumlocution. Another mannerism which grew upon Dickens, and was faithfully imitated by several of his disciples, was primarily due to his habit of turning a fact, fancy, or situation round on every side. This consisted in the reiteration of a construction, or of part of a construction, in the strained rhetorical fashion to which he at last accustomed us in spite of ourselves, but to which we were loath to submit in his imitators. These and certain other peculiarities, which it would be difficult to indicate without incurring the charge of hypercriticism, hardened as the style of Dickens hardened; and, for instance, in "A Tale of Two Cities" his mannerisms may be seen side by side in glittering array. By way of compensation, the occasional solecisms and vulgarisms of his earlier style (he only very gradually ridded himself of the cockney habit of punning) no longer marred his pages; and he ceased to break or lapse occasionally, in highly-impassioned passages, into blank verse.

From first to last Dickens's mannerism, like everything which he made part of himself, was not merely assumed on occasion, but was, so to speak, absorbed into his nature. It shows itself in almost everything that he wrote in his later years, from the most carefully elaborated chapters of his books down to the most deeply felt passages of his most familiar correspondence, in the midst of the most genuine pathos and most exuberant humour of his books,

and in the midst of the sound sense and unaffected piety of his private letters. Future generations may, for this very reason, be perplexed and irritated by what we merely stumbled at, and may wish that what is an element hardly separable from many of Dickens's compositions were away from them, as one wishes away from his signature that horrible flourish which in his letters he sometimes represents himself as too tired to append.

But no distaste for his mannerisms is likely to obscure the sense of his achievements in the branch of literature to which he devoted the full powers of his genius and the best energies of his nature. He introduced indeed no new species of prose fiction into our literature. In the historical novel he made two far from unsuccessful essays, in the earlier of which in particular—"Barnaby Rudge"—he showed a laudable desire to enter into the spirit of a past age; but he was without the reading or the patience of either the author of "Waverley" or the author of "The Virginians," and without the fine historic enthusiasm which animates the broader workmanship of "Westward Ho!" For the purely imaginative romance, on the other hand, of which in some of his works Lord Lytton was the most prominent representative in contemporary English literature, Dickens's genius was not without certain affinities; but to feel his full strength, he needed to touch the earth with his feet. Thus it is no mere phrase to say of him that he found the ideal in the real, and drew his inspirations from the world around him. Perhaps the strongest temptation which ever seemed likely to divert him from the sounder forms in which his masterpieces were cast, lay in the direction of the *novel with a purpose*, the fiction intended primarily and above all things to promote the correction of some social abuse, or the achievement of some social reform. But in spite of himself, to whom the often voiceless cause of the suffering and the oppressed was at all times dearer than any mere literary success, he was preserved from binding his muse, as his friend Cruikshank bound his art, handmaid in a service with which freedom was irreconcilable. His artistic instinct helped him in this, and perhaps also the consciousness that where, as in "The Chimes" or in "Hard Times," he had gone furthest in this direction, there had been something jarring in the result. Thus, under the in-

fluences described above, he carried on the English novel mainly in the directions which it had taken under its early masters, and more especially in those in which the essential attributes of his own genius prompted him to excel.

Among the elements on which the effect alike of the novelist's and of the dramatist's work must, apart from style and diction, essentially depend, that of construction is obviously one of the most significant. In this Dickens was, in the earlier period of his authorship, very far from strong. This was due in part to the accident that he began his literary career as a writer of "Sketches," and that his first continuous book, "Pickwick," was originally designed as little more than a string of such. It was due in a still greater measure to the influence of those masters of English fiction with whom he had been familiar from boyhood, above all to Smollett. And though, by dint of his usual energy, he came to be able to invent a plot so generally effective as that of "A Tale of Two Cities," or, I was about to say, of "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," yet on this head he had had to contend against a special difficulty; I mean, of course, the publication of most of his books in monthly or even weekly numbers. In the case of a writer both pathetic and humorous, the serial method of publication leads the public to expect its due allowance of both pathos and humour every month or week, even if each number, to borrow a homely simile applied in "Oliver Twist" to books in general, need not contain "the tragic and the comic scenes in as regular alternation as the layers of red and white in a side of streaky bacon." And again, as in a melodrama of the old school, each serial division has, if possible, to close emphatically, effectively, with a promise of yet stranger, more touching, more laughable things to come. On the other hand, with this form of publication repetition is frequently necessary by way of "reminder" to indolent readers, whose memory needs refreshing after the long pauses between the acts. Fortunately, Dickens abhorred living, as it were, from hand to mouth, and thus diminished the dangers to which, I cannot help thinking, Thackeray at times almost succumbed. Yet, notwithstanding, in the arrangement of his incidents and the contrivance of his plots it is often impossible to avoid noting the imperfection of the machinery, or at least the traces of effort. I

have already said under what influences, in my opinion, Dickens acquired a constructive skill which would have been conspicuous in most other novelists.

If in the combination of parts the workmanship of Dickens was not invariably of the best, on the other hand in the invention of those parts themselves he excelled, his imaginative power and dramatic instinct combining to produce an endless succession of effective scenes and situations, ranging through almost every variety of the pathetic and the humorous. In no direction was nature a more powerful aid to art with him than in this. From his very boyhood he appears to have possessed in a developed form what many others may possess in its germ, the faculty of converting into a scene—putting, as it were, into a frame—personages that came under his notice, and the background on which he saw them. Who can forget the scene in "David Copperfield," in which the friendless little boy attracts the wonderment of the good people of the public house where—it being a special occasion—he has demanded a glass of their "very best ale, with a head to it"? In the autobiographical fragment already cited, where the story appears in almost the same words, Dickens exclaims: "Here we stand, all three, before me now, in my study in Devonshire Terrace. The landlord, in his shirt-sleeves, leaning against the bar window-frame; his wife, looking over the little half-door; and I, in some confusion, looking up at them from outside the partition."

He saw the scene while he was an actor in it. Already the "Sketches by Boz" showed the exuberance of this power, and in his last years more than one paper in the delightful "Uncommercial Traveller" series proved it to be as inexhaustible as ever, while the art with which it was exercised had become more refined. Who has better described (for who was more sensitive to it?) the mysterious influence of crowds, and who the pitiful pathos of solitude? Who has ever surpassed Dickens in his representations, varied a thousandfold, but still appealing to the same emotions, common to us all, of the crises or turning-points of human life? Who has dwelt with a more potent effect on that catastrophe which the drama of every human life must reach; whose scenes of death in its pathetic, pitiful, reverend, terrible, ghastly forms speak more to the imagination and more to the heart? There is, however,

one species of scenes in which the genius of Dickens seems to me to exercise a still stronger spell—those which *precede* a catastrophe, which are charged like thunder-clouds with the coming storm. And here the constructive art is at work; for it is the arrangement of the incidents, past and to come, combined by anticipation in the mind of the reader, which gives their extraordinary force to such scenes as the nocturnal watching of Nancy by Noah, or Carker's early walk to the railway station, where he is to meet his doom. Extremely powerful, too, in a rather different way, is the scene in "Little Dorrit," described in a word or two, of the parting of Bar and Physician at dawn, after they have "found out Mr. Merdle's complaint":

"Before parting, at Physician's door, they both looked up at the sunny morning sky, into which the smoke of a few early fires, and the breath and voices of a few early stirrers, were peacefully rising, and then looked round upon the immense city, and said: 'If all those hundreds and thousands of beggared people who were yet asleep could only know, as they two spoke, the ruin that impended over them, what a fearful cry against one miserable soul would go up to Heaven!'" Nor is it awe only, but pity also, which he is able thus to move beforehand, as in "Dombey and Son," in the incomparable scenes leading up to little Paul's death.

More diverse opinions have been expressed as to Dickens's mastery of that highest part of the novelist's art, which we call characterisation. Undoubtedly, the characters which he draws are included in a limited range. Yet I question whether their range can be justly termed narrow as compared with that commanded by any other great English novelist except Scott, or with those of many novelists of other literatures except Balzac. But within his own range Dickens is unapproached. His novels do not altogether avoid the common danger of uninteresting heroes and insipid heroines; but only a very few of his heroes are conventionally declamatory like Nicholas Nickleby, and few of his heroines simper sentimentally like Rose Maylie. Nor can I for a moment assent to the condemnation which has been pronounced upon all the female characters in Dickens's books, as more or less feeble or artificial. At the same time it is true that from women

of a mightier mould Dickens's imagination turns aside; he could not have drawn a Dorothea Casaubon any more than he could have drawn Romola herself. Similarly, heroes of the chivalrous or magnanimous type, representatives of generous effort in a great cause, will not easily be met with in his writings: he never even essayed the picture of an artist devoted to art for her own sake.

It suited the genius, and in later years perhaps the temper, of Dickens as an author, to leave out of sight those "public virtues" to which no man was in truth less blind than himself, and to remain content with the illustration of types of the private or domestic kind. We may cheerfully take to us the censure that our great humorist was in nothing more English than in this—that his sympathy with the affections of the hearth and the home knew almost no bounds. A symbolisation of this may be found in the honour which, from the "Sketches" and "Pickwick" onwards through a long series of Christmas books and Christmas Numbers, Dickens, doubtless very consciously, paid to the one great festival of English family life. Yet so far am I from agreeing with those critics who think that he is hereby lowered to the level of the poets of the teapot and the plum-pudding, that I am at a loss how to express my admiration for this side of his genius—tender with the tenderness of Cowper, playful with the playfulness of Goldsmith, natural with the naturalness of the author of "Amelia." Who was ever more at home with children than he, and, for that matter, with babies to begin with? Mr. Horne relates how he once heard a lady exclaim: "Oh, do read to us about the baby; Dickens is capital at a baby!" Even when most playful, most farcical concerning children, his fun is rarely without something of true tenderness, for he knew the meaning of that dreariest solitude which he has so often pictured, but nowhere, of course, with a truthfulness going so straight to the heart as in "David Copperfield"—the solitude of a child left to itself. Another wonderfully true child-character is that of Pip in "Great Expectations," who is also, as his years progress, an admirable study of boy-nature. For Dickens thoroughly understood what that mysterious variety of humankind really is, and was always, if one may so say, on the look-out for him. He knew him in the brightness and freshness which makes

true *ingênus* of such delightful characters (rare enough in fiction) as Walter Gay and Mrs. Lirriper's grandson. He knew him in his festive mood—witness the amusing letter in which he describes a water-expedition at Eton with his son and two of his irrepressible schoolfellows. He knew him in his precocity—the boy of about three feet high at the George and Vulture, "in a hairy cap and fustian overalls, whose garb bespoke a laudable ambition to attain in time the elevation of an hostler"; and the thing on the roof of the Harrisburg coach, which, when the rain was over, slowly upreared itself, and patronisingly piped out the inquiry: "Well now, stranger, I guess you find this a'most like an English arternoon, hey?" He knew the Gavroche who danced attendance on Mr. Quilp at his wharf, and those strangest, but by no means least true, types of all, the pupil-teachers in Mr. Fagin's academy.

But these, with the exception of the last-named, which show much shrewd and kindly insight into the paradoxes of human nature, are of course the mere *croquis* of the great humorist's pencil. His men and women, and the passions, the desires, the loves, and hatreds that agitate them, he has usually chosen to depict on that background of domestic life which is in a greater or less degree common to us all. And it is thus also that he has secured to himself the vast public which vibrates very differently from a mere class or section of society to the touch of a popular speaker or writer. "The more," he writes, "we see of life and its brevity, and the world and its varieties, the more we know that no exercise of our abilities in any art, but the addressing of it to the great ocean of humanity in which we are drops, and not to bye-ponds (very stagnant) here and there, ever can or ever will lay the foundations of an endurable retrospect." The types of character which in his fictions he chiefly delights in reproducing are accordingly those which most of us have opportunities enough of comparing with the realities around us; and this test, a sound one within reasonable limits, was the test he demanded. To no other author were his own characters ever more real; and Forster observes, that "what he had most to notice in Dickens at the very outset of his career, was his indifference to any praise of his performances on the merely literary side, compared with the higher recognition of them as bits of actual life, with the meaning and pur-

pose, on their part, and the responsibility on his, of realities, rather than creations of fancy." It is, then, the favourite growths of our own age and country for which we shall most readily look in his works, and not look in vain: avarice and prodigality; pride in all its phases; hypocrisy in its endless varieties, unctuous and plausible, fawning and self-satisfied, formal and moral; and, on the other side, faithfulness, simplicity, long-suffering patience, and indomitable heroic good humour. Do we not daily make room on the pavement for Mr. Dombey erect, solemn, and icy, alongside of whom in the road Mr. Carker deferentially walks his sleek horse? Do we not know more than one Anthony Chuzzlewit laying up money for himself and his son, and a curse for both along with it; and many a Richard Carston, sinking, sinking, as the hope grows feebler that Justice or Fortune will at last help one who has not learnt how to help himself? And will not prodigals of a more buoyant kind, like the immortal Mr. Micawber (though, maybe, with an eloquence less ornate than his), when *their* boat is on the shore and *their* bark is on the sea, become "perfectly businesslike and perfectly practical," and propose, in acknowledgment of a parting gift we had neither hoped nor desired to see again, "bills" or, if we should prefer it, "a bond, or any other description of security?" All this will happen to us, as surely as we shall be buttonholed by Pecksniffs in a state of philanthropic exultation; and watched round corners by 'umble but observant Uriah Heeps; and affronted in what is best in us by the worst hypocrite of all, the hypocrite of religion, who flaunts in our eyes his greasy substitute for what he calls the "light of terewth." To be sure, unless it be Mr. Chadband and those of his tribe, we shall find the hypocrite and the man-out-at-elbows in real life less endurable than their representatives in fiction; for Dickens well understood, "that if you do not administer a disagreeable character carefully, the public have a decided tendency to think that the *story* is disagreeable, and not merely the fictitious form." His economy is less strict with characters of the opposite class, true copies of Nature's own handiwork—the Tom Pinches and Trotty Vecks and Clara Peggottys, who reconcile us with our kind, and Mr. Pickwick himself, "a human being replete with benevolence," to borrow a phrase from a noble pas-

sage in Dickens's most congenial predecessor. These characters in Dickens have a warmth which only the creations of Fielding and Smollett had possessed before, and which, like these old masters, he occasionally carries to excess. At the other extreme stand those characters in which the art of Dickens, always in union with the promptings of his moral nature, illustrates the mitigating or redeeming qualities observable even in the outcasts of our civilisation. To me his figures of this kind, when they are not too intensely elaborated, are not the least touching; and there is something as pathetic in the uncouth convict Magwitch as in the consumptive crossing-sweeper Jo.

As a matter of course, it is possible to take exceptions of one kind or another to some of the characters created by Dickens in so extraordinary a profusion. I hardly know of any other novelist less obnoxious to the charge of repeating himself; though, of course, many characters in his earlier or shorter works contained in themselves the germs of later and fuller developments. But Bob Sawyer and Dick Swiveller, Noah Claypole and Uriah Heep are at least sufficiently independent variations on the same themes. On the other hand, Filer and Cute, in "The Chimes," were the first sketches of Gradgrind and Bounderby, in "Hard Times," and Clemency in "The Battle of Life," prefigures Peggotty in "David Copperfield." No one could seriously quarrel with such repetitions as these, and there are remarkably few of them; for the fertile genius of Dickens took delight in the variety of its creativeness, and, as if to exemplify this, there was no relation upon the contrasted humours of which he better loved to dwell than that of partnership. It has been seen how rarely his inventive power condescended to supplement itself by what in the novel corresponds to the mimicry of the stage, and what in truth is as degrading to the one as it is to the other—the reproduction of originals *from real life*. On the other hand, he carries his habit too far of making a particular phrase do duty as an index of a character. This trick also is a trick of the stage, where it often enough makes the judicious grieve. Many may be inclined to censure it in Dickens as one of several forms of the exaggeration which is so frequently condemned in him. There was no charge to which he was more sensitive; and in the preface to "Martin Chuzzle-

wit" he accordingly (not for the first time) turned round upon the objectors, declaring roundly that "what is exaggeration to one class of minds and perceptions is plain truth to another"; and hinting a doubt "whether it is *always* the writer who colours highly, or whether it is now and then the reader whose eye for colour is a little dull." I certainly do not think that the term "exaggerated" is correctly applied to such conventional characters of sensational romance as Rosa Dartle, who has, as it were, lost her way into "David Copperfield," while Hortense and Madame Defarge seem to be in their proper places in "Bleak House," and "A Tale of Two Cities." In his earlier writings, and in the fresher and less overcharged serious parts of his later books, he rarely if ever paints black in black; even the Jew Fagin has a moment of relenting against the sleeping Oliver; he is not that unreal thing, a "demon," whereas Sikes is that real thing, a brute. On the other hand, certainly he at times makes his characters more laughable than nature; few great humorists have so persistently sought to efface the line which separates the barely possible from the morally probable. This was, no doubt, largely due to his inclination towards the grotesque, which a severer literary training might have taught him to restrain; thus he liked to introduce insane or imbecile personages into fiction, where, as in real life, they are often dangerous to handle. It is to his sense of the grotesque, rather than to any deep-seated satirical intention, and certainly not to any want of reverence or piety in his very simple and very earnest nature, that I would likewise ascribe the exaggeration and unfairness of which he is guilty against Little Bethel and all its works. But in this, as in other instances, no form of humour requires more delicate handling than the grotesque, and none is more liable to cause fatigue. Latterly, Dickens was always adding to his gallery of eccentric portraits, and, if inner currents may be traced by outward signs, it may be worth while to apply the test of his *names*, which become more and more odd as their owners deviate more and more from the path of nature. Who more simply and yet more happily named than the leading members of the Pickwick Club—from the poet, Mr. Snodgrass, to the sportsman, Mr. Winkle—Nathaniel, not Daniel; but with Veneering and Lammle, and Boffin and

Venus, and Crisparkle and Grewgious—be they actual names or not—we feel instinctively that we are in the region of the transnormal.

Lastly, in their descriptive power and the faithfulness with which they portray the life and ways of particular periods or countries, of special classes, professions, or other divisions of mankind, the books of Dickens are, again of course within their range, unequalled. He sought his materials chiefly at home, though his letters from Italy and Switzerland and America, and his French pictures in sketch and story, show how much wider a field his descriptive powers might have covered. The "Sketches by Boz" and the "Pickwick Papers" showed a mastery, unsurpassed before or since, in the description of the life of English society in its middle and lower classes, and in "Oliver Twist" he lifted the curtain from some of the rotten parts of our civilisation. This history of a workhouse child also sounded the note of that sympathy with the poor which gave to Dickens's descriptions of their sufferings and their struggles a veracity beyond mere accuracy of detail. He was still happier in describing their household virtues, their helpfulness to one another, their compassion for those who are the poorest of all—the friendless and the outcast—as he did in his "Old Curiosity Shop," and in most of his Christmas books. His pictures of middle-class life abounded in kindly humour; but the humour and pathos of poverty—more especially the poverty which has not yet lost its self-respect—commended themselves most of all to his descriptive power. Where, as in "Nicholas Nickleby" and later works, he essayed to describe the manners of the higher classes, he was, as a rule, far less successful: partly because there was in his nature a vein of rebellion against the existing system of society, so that except in his latest books, he usually approached a description of members of its dominant orders with a satirical intention, or at least an undertone of bitterness. At the same time, I demur to the common assertion that Dickens could not draw a real gentleman. All that can be said is that it very rarely suited his purpose to do so, supposing the term to include manners as well as feelings and actions; though Mr. Twemlow, in "Our Mutual Friend," might be instanced as a perhaps rather conscious exception of one kind, and Sir Leicester Ded-

lock, in the latter part of "Bleak House," as another. Moreover, a closer examination of Lord Frederick Verisopht and Cousin Feenix will show that, gull as the one, and ninny as the other is, neither has anything that can be called ungentlemanly about him; on the contrary, the characters, on the whole, rather plead in favour of the advantage than of the valuelessness of blue blood. As for Dickens's other noblemen, whom I find enumerated in an American dictionary of his characters, they are nearly all mere passing embodiments of satirical fancies, which pretend to be nothing more.

Another ingenious enthusiast has catalogued the numerous callings, professions, and trades of the personages appearing in Dickens's works. I cannot agree with the criticism that in his personages the man is apt to become forgotten in the externals of his calling—the barrister's wig and gown, as it were, standing for the barrister, and the beadle's cocked hat and staff for the beadle. But he must have possessed in its perfection the curious detective faculty of deducing a man's occupation from his manners. To him nothing wore a neutral tint, and no man or woman was featureless. He was, it should be remembered, always observing; half his life he was afoot. When he undertook to describe any novel or unfamiliar kind of manners, he spared no time or trouble in making a special study of his subject. He was not content to know the haunts of the London thieves by hearsay, or to read the history of opium-smoking and its effects in blue books. From the office of his journal in London, we find him starting on these self-imposed commissions, and from his hotel in New York. The whole art of descriptive reporting, which has no doubt produced a large quantity of trashy writing, but has also been of real service in arousing a public interest in neglected corners of our social life, was, if not actually set on foot, at any rate reinvigorated and vitalised by him. No one was so delighted to notice the oddities which habit and tradition stereotype in particular classes of men; a complete natural history of the country actor, the London landlady, and the British waiter might be compiled from his pages. This power of observation and description extended from human life to that of animals. His habits of life could not but make him the friend of dogs, and there is some reason for a title which was

bestowed on him in a paper in a London magazine concerning his own dogs—the Landseer of Fiction. His letters are full of delightful details concerning these friends and companions, Turk, Linda, and the rest of them; nor is the family of their fictitious counterparts, culminating (intellectually) in Merrylegs, less numerous and delightful. Cats were less congenial to Dickens, perhaps because he had no objection to changing house; and they appear in his works in no more attractive form than as the attendant spirits of Mrs. Pipchin and of Mr. Krook. But for the humours of animals in general he had a wonderfully quick eye. Of his ravens I have already spoken. The pony Whisker is the type of kind old gentlemen's ponies. In one of his letters occurs an admirably droll description of the pig-market at Boulogne; and the best unscientific description ever given of a spider was imagined by Dickens at Broadstairs, when in his solitude he thought "of taming spiders, as Baron Trenck did. There is one in my cell (with a speckled body and twenty-two very decided knees) who seems to know me."

In everything, whether animate or inanimate, he found out at once the characteristic feature, and reproduced it in words of faultless precision. This is the real secret of his descriptive power, the exercise of which it would be easy to pursue through many other classes of subjects. Scenery, for its own sake, he rarely cared to describe; but no one better understood how to reproduce the combined effect of scenery and weather on the predisposed mind. Thus London and its river in especial are, as I have said, haunted by the memory of Dickens's books. To me it was for years impossible to pass near London Bridge at night, or to idle in the Temple on summer days, or to frequent a hundred other localities on or near the Thames, without instinctively recalling pictures scattered through the works of Dickens—in this respect, also, a real *liber veritatis*.

Thus, and in many ways which it would be labour lost to attempt to describe, and by many a stroke or touch of genius which it would be idle to seek to reproduce in paraphrase, the most observing and the most imaginative of our English humorists revealed to us that infinite multitude of associations which binds men together, and makes us members one of another. But though observation and imagination might discern and discover these

associations, sympathy—the sympathy of a generous human heart with humanity—alone could breathe into them the warmth of life. Happily, to most men, there is one place consecrated above others to the feelings of love and goodwill; "that great altar where the worst among us sometimes perform the worship of the heart, and where the best have offered up such sacrifices and done such deeds of heroism as, chronicled, would put the proudest temples of old time, with all their vaunting annals, to the blush." It was thus that Dickens spoke of the sanctity of *home*; and, English in many things, he was most English in that love of home to which he was never weary of testifying. But, though the "pathway of the sublime" may have been closed to him, he knew well enough that the interests of a people and the interests of humanity are mightier than the domestic loves and cares of any man; and he conscientiously addressed himself, as to the task of his life, to the endeavour to knit humanity together. The method which he, by instinct and by choice, more especially pursued was that of seeking to show the "good in everything." This it is that made him, unreasonably sometimes, ignobly never, the champion of the poor, the helpless, the outcast. He was often tempted into a rhetoric too loud and too shrill, into a satire neither fine nor fair; for he was impatient, but not impatient of what he thought true and good. His purpose, however, was worthy of his powers; nor is there recorded among the lives of English men of letters any more single-minded in its aim, and more successful in the pursuit of it, than his. He was much criticised in his lifetime; and he will, I am well aware, be often criticised in the future by keener and more capable judges than myself. They may miss much in his writings that I find in them; but, unless they find one thing there, it were better that they never opened one of his books. He has indicated it himself when criticising a literary performance by a clever writer:

"In this little MS. everything is too much patronised and condescended to, whereas the slightest touch of feeling for the rustic who is of the earth earthy, or of sisterhood with the homely servant who has made her face shine in her desire to please, would make a difference that the writer can generally imagine without trying it. You don't want any sentiment laboriously made out in such a thing.

You don't want any maudlin show of it. But you do want a pervading suggestion that it is there."

The sentiment which Dickens means is the salt which will give a fresh savour of their own to his works so long as our language endures.

CRITICAL ESTIMATES OF CHARLES DICKENS.

DICKENS AS A NOVELIST.

BY

HIPPOLYTE A. TAINE.

THE first question which should be asked in connection with an artist is this: How does he regard objects? With what clearness, what energy, what force? The reply defines his whole work beforehand: for in a writer of novels the imagination is the master faculty; the art of composition, good taste, appreciation of truth, depend upon it; one degree more of vehemence destroys the style which expresses it, changes the character which it produces, breaks the framework in which it is enclosed. Consider that of Dickens, and you will perceive therein the cause of his faults and his merits, his power and his excess.

He has the painter in him, and the English painter. Never surely did a mind figure to itself with more exact detail or greater energy all the parts and tints of a picture. . . .

An imagination so lucid and energetic cannot but animate inanimate objects without an effort. It provokes in the mind in which it works extraordinary emotions, and the author pours over the objects which he figures to himself something of the ever-welling passion which overflows in him. Stones for him take a voice, white walls swell out into big phantoms, black wells yawn hideously and mysteriously in the darkness; legions of strange creatures whirl shuddering over the fantastic landscape; blank

nature is peopled; inert matter moves. But the images remain clear; in this madness there is nothing vague or disorderly; imaginary objects are designed with outlines as precise and details as numerous as real objects, and the dream is equal to the truth.

There is, among others, a description of the night wind, quaint and powerful, which recalls certain pages of "Notre Dame de Paris." The source of this description, as of all those of Dickens, is pure imagination. He does not, like Walter Scott, describe in order to give his reader a map, and to lay down the locality of his drama. He does not, like Lord Byron, describe from love of magnificent nature, and in order to display a splendid succession of grand pictures. He dreams neither of attaining exactness nor of selecting beauty. Struck with a certain spectacle, he is transported, and breaks out into unforeseen figures. Now it is the yellow leaves, pursued by the wind, fleeing and jostling, shivering, scared, in a giddy chase, lying in the furrows, drowned in the ditches, perching in the trees. Here it is the night wind, sweeping round a church, moaning as it tries with its unseen hand the windows and the doors, and seeking out some crevices by which to enter.

Hitherto you have only recognised the sombre imagination of a man of the north. A little further you perceive the impassioned religion of a revolutionary Protestant, when he speaks to you of "a ghostly sound, too, lingering within the altar; where it seems to chaunt, in its wild way, of Wrong and Murder done, and false Gods worshipped; in defiance of the Tables of the Law, which look so fair and smooth, but are so flawed and broken. Ugh! Heaven preserve us, sitting snugly round the fire! It has an awful voice, that wind at Midnight, singing in a church!" But an instant after, the artist speaks again; he leads you to the belfry, and in the racket of the accumulated words, communicates to your nerves the sensation of the aërial tempest. The wind whistles, blows, and gambols in the arches:

"High up in the steeple, where it is free to come and go through many an airy arch and loophole, and to twist and twine itself about the giddy stair, and twirl the groaning weathercock, and make the very tower shake and shiver!"

Dickens has seen it all in the old belfry; his thought is

a mirror; not the smallest or ugliest detail escapes him. He has counted "the iron rails ragged with rust"; "the sheets of lead," wrinkled and shrivelled, which crackle and heave astonished under the foot which treads them; "the shabby nests" which "the birds stuff into corners" of the mossy joists; the grey dust heaped up; "the speckled spiders, indolent and fat with long security," which hanging by a thread, "swing idly to and fro in the vibration of the bells," and which on a sudden alarm climb up like sailors on their ropes, or "drop upon the ground and ply a score of nimble legs to save a life." This picture captivates us. Kept up at such a height, among the fleeting clouds which spread their shadows over the town, and the feeble lights scarce distinguished in the mist, we feel a sort of vertigo; and we hardly fail to discover, with Dickens, thought and a soul in the metallic voice of the chimes which inhabit this trembling castle.

He makes a story out of them, and it is not the first. Dickens is a poet; he is as much at home in the imaginative world as in the actual. Here the chimes are talking to the old messenger, and consoling him. Elsewhere it is the Cricket on the Hearth singing of all domestic joys, and bringing before the eyes of the desolate master the happy evenings, the sanguine hopes, the happiness, the quiet cheerfulness which he has enjoyed, and which he has no longer. In another tale it is the history of a sick and precocious child who feels itself dying, and who, sleeping in the arms of its sister, hears the distant song of the murmuring waves which rocked him to sleep. Objects, with Dickens, take their hue from the thoughts of his characters. His imagination is so lively, that it carries everything with it in the path which it chooses. If the character is happy, the stones, flowers, and clouds must be happy, too; if he is sad, nature must weep with him. Even to the ugly houses in the street, all speak. The style runs through a swarm of visions; it breaks out into the strangest oddities. Here is a young girl, pretty and good, who crosses Fountain Court and the low purlieus in search of her brother. What more simple? what even more vulgar? Dickens is carried away by it. To entertain her, he summons up birds, trees, houses, the fountain, the offices, law papers, and much besides. It is a folly, and it is all but an enchantment. . . .

We shall see how it is excited. Imagine a shop, no matter what shop, the most repulsive; that of a marine-store dealer. Dickens sees the barometers, chronometers, telescopes, compasses, charts, maps, sextants, speaking-trumpets, and so forth. He sees so many, sees them so clearly, they are crowded and crammed, they replace each other so forcibly in his brain, which they fill and litter; there are so many geographical and nautical ideas scattered under the glass cases hung from the ceiling, nailed to the wall, they swamp him from so many sides, and in such abundance, that he loses his judgment. "The shop itself, partaking of the general infection, seemed almost to become a snug, seagoing, shipshape concern, wanting only good sea-room, in the event of an unexpected launch, to work its way securely to any desert island in the world."

The difference between a madman and a man of genius is not very great. Napoleon, who knew men, said so to Esquirol. The same faculty leads us to glory or throws us in a cell in a lunatic asylum. It is visionary imagination which forges the phantoms of the madman and creates the personages of an artist, and the classifications serving for the first may serve for the second. The imagination of Dickens is like that of monomaniacs. To plunge oneself into an idea, to be absorbed by it, to see nothing else, to repeat it under a hundred forms, to enlarge it, to carry it thus enlarged to the eye of the spectator, to dazzle and overwhelm him with it, to stamp it upon him so tenacious and impressive that he can never again tear it from his memory—these are the great features of this imagination and style. In this, "David Copperfield" is a masterpiece. Never did objects remain more visible and present to the memory of a reader than those which he describes. The old house, the parlour, the kitchen, Peggotty's boat, and above all the school-yard, are interiors whose relief, energy, and precision are unequalled. Dickens has the passion and patience of the painters of his nation; he reckons his details one by one, notes the various hues of the old tree-trunks; sees the dilapidated cask, the green and broken flagstones, the chinks of the damp walls; he distinguishes the strange smells which rise from them; marks the size of the mossy spots, reads the names of the scholars carved on the door, and dwells on the form of the letters. And this minute description has nothing cold about it: if it is

thus detailed, it is because the contemplation was intense; it proves its passion by its exactness. We felt this passion without accounting for it; suddenly we find it at the end of a page; the boldness of the style renders it visible, and the violence of the phrase attests the violence of the impression. Excessive metaphors bring before the mind grotesque fancies. We feel ourselves beset by extravagant visions. Mr. Mell takes his flute, and blows on it, says Copperfield, "until I almost thought he would gradually blow his whole being into the large hole at the top, and ooze away at the keys." We think of Hoffmann's fantastic tales; we are arrested by a fixed idea, and our head begins to ache. These eccentricities are the style of sickness rather than of health.

Therefore Dickens is admirable in the depicture of hallucinations. We see that he feels himself those of his characters, that he is engrossed by their ideas, that he enters into their madness. As an Englishman and a moralist, he has described remorse frequently. Perhaps it may be said that he makes a scarecrow of it, and that an artist is wrong to transform himself into an assistant of the policeman and the preacher. What of that? The portrait of Jonas Chuzzlewit is so terrible that we may pardon it for being useful. Jonas, leaving his chamber secretly, has treacherously murdered his enemy, and thinks thenceforth to breathe in peace; but the recollection of the murder gradually disorganises his mind, like poison. He is no longer able to control his ideas; they bear him on with the fury of a terrified horse. He is for ever thinking, and shuddering as he thinks of the chamber where they believed he slept. He sees this chamber, counts the pattern, pictures the long folds of the dark curtains, the hollows of the bed which he has disarranged, the door at which some one might have knocked. The more he wants to escape from this vision, the more he is immersed in it; it is a burning gulf in which he rolls, struggling, with cries and sweats of agony. He fancies himself lying in his bed, as he ought to be, and an instant after he sees himself there. He fears this other self. The dream is so vivid, that he is not sure that he is not in London. "He became in a manner his own ghost and phantom." And this imaginary being, like a mirror, only redoubles before his conscience the image of assassination and punishment. He returns, and shuf-

flies, with pale face, to the door of his chamber. He, a man of business, a reckoner, a coarse machine of positive reasoning, has become as fanciful as a nervous woman. He advances on tiptoe, as if he were afraid of rousing the imaginary man, whom he pictures lying in the bed. At the moment when he turns the key in the lock, "a monstrous fear beset his mind. What if the murdered man were there before him!" At last he enters, and buries himself in his bed, burnt up with fever. "He buried himself beneath the blankets," so as to try not to see the cursed room; he sees it more clearly still. The rustling of the coverings, the buzz of an insect, the beatings of his heart, all cry to him, Murdered! His mind fixed with "an agony of listening" on the door, he ends by thinking that people open it; he hears it creak. His senses are distorted; he dares not mistrust them, he dares no longer believe in them; and in this nightmare, in which drowned reason leaves nothing but a chaos of hideous forms, he finds no reality but the incessant burden of his convulsive despair. Thenceforth all his thoughts, dangers, the whole world disappears for him in "the one dread question only, "When would they find the body in the wood?" He forces himself to distract his thoughts from this; they remain stamped and glued to it; they hold him to it as by a chain of iron. He continually figures himself going into the wood, "going softly about it and about it among the leaves, approaching it nearer and nearer through a gap in the boughs, and startling the very flies, that were thickly sprinkled all over it, like heaps of dried currants." And he always ends with the idea of the discovery; he expects news of it, listening rapt to the cries and shouts in the street, hearing men come in and go out, come up and go down. At the same time, he has ever before his eyes that corpse "lying alone in the wood"; "he was for ever showing and presenting it, as it were, to every creature whom he saw. Look here! do you know of this? Is it found? Do you suspect me?" If he had been condemned to bear the body in his arms, and lay it down for recognition at the feet of every one he met, it could not have been more constantly with him or a cause of more monotonous and dismal occupation than it was in this state of his mind.

Jonas is on the verge of madness. There are other char-

acters quite mad. Dickens has drawn three of four portraits of madmen, very agreeable at first sight, but so true that they are in reality horrible. It needed an imagination like his, irregular, excessive, capable of fixed ideas, to exhibit the derangement of reason. Two especially there are which make us laugh, and which make us shudder. Augustus, the gloomy maniac, who is on the point of marrying Miss Pecksniff; and poor Mr. Dick, half an idiot, half a monomaniac, who lives with Miss Trotwood. To understand these sudden exaltations, these unforeseen gloominesses, these incredible somersaults of perverted sensibility; to reproduce these hiatuses of thought, these interruptions of reasoning, this recurrence of a word, always the same, which breaks in upon a phrase attempted and overturns renascent reason; to see the stupid smile, the vacant look, the foolish and uneasy physiognomy of these haggard old children who painfully involve idea in idea, and stumble at every step on the threshold of the truth which they cannot attain, is a faculty which Hoffmann alone has possessed in an equal degree with Dickens. The play of these shattered reasons is like the creaking of a dislocated door; it makes one sick to hear it. We find, if we like, a discordant burst of laughter, but we discover still more easily a groan and a lamentation, and we are terrified to gauge the lucidity, strangeness, exaltation, violence of imagination which has produced such creations, which has carried them on and sustained them unbendingly to the end, and which found itself in its proper sphere in imitating and producing their irrationality.

To what can this force be applied? Imaginations differ not only in their nature, but also in their object; after having gauged their energy, we must define their domain; in the broad world the artist makes a world for himself; involuntarily he chooses a class of objects which he prefers; others do not warm his genius, and he does not perceive them. Dickens does not perceive great things; this is the second feature of his imagination. Enthusiasm seizes him in connection with everything, especially in connection with vulgar objects, a curiosity shop, a sign-post, a town crier. He has vigour, he does not attain beauty. His instrument gives vibrating sounds, but not harmonious. If he is describing a house, he will draw it with geometrical clearness; he will put all its colours in relief,

discover a face and thought in the shutters and the pipes; he will make a sort of human being out of the house, grimacing and forcible, which will chain our regard, and which we shall never forget; but he will not see the grandeur of the long monumental lines, the calm majesty of the broad shadows boldly divided by the white plaster, the cheerfulness of the light which covers them, and becomes palpable in the black niches in which it is poured, as though to rest and to sleep. If he is painting a landscape, he will perceive the haws which dot with their red fruit the leafless hedges, the thin vapour streaming from a distant stream, the motions of an insect in the grass; but the deep poetry which would have seized the author of "Valentine" and "André" will escape him. He will be lost, like the painters of his country, in the minute and impassioned observation of small things; he will have no love of beautiful forms and fine colours. He will not perceive that the blue and the red, the straight line and the curve, are enough to compose vast concerts, which amid so many various expressions maintain a grand serenity, and open up in the depths of the soul a spring of health and happiness. Happiness is lacking in him; his inspiration is a feverish rapture, which does not select its objects, which animates promiscuously the ugly, the vulgar, the ridiculous, and which, communicating to his creations an indescribable jerkiness and violence, deprives them of the delight and harmony which in other hands they might have retained. Miss Ruth is a very pretty housekeeper; she puts on her apron: what a treasure this apron is! Dickens turns it over and over, like a milliner's shopman who wants to sell it. She holds it in her hands, then she puts it round her waist, ties the strings, spreads it out, smoothes it that it may fall well. What does she not do with her apron? And how delighted is Dickens during these innocent occupations! He utters little exclamations of joyous fun. "Oh Heaven, what a wicked little stomacher!" He apostrophises a ring, he sports round Ruth, claps his hands for pleasure. It is much worse when she is making the pudding; there is a whole scene, dramatic and lyric, with exclamations, protasis, sudden inversions, as complete as a Greek tragedy. These kitchen refinements and this waggery of imagination make us think (by way of contrast) ·c interior pictures of George Sand, of the room of

Geneviève the flower-girl. She, like Ruth, is making a useful object, very useful, since she will sell it to-morrow for tenpence; but this object is a full-blown rose, whose fragile petals are moulded by her fingers as by the fingers of a fairy, whose fresh corolla is purpled with a vermilion as tender as that of her cheeks; a fragile masterpiece which has bloomed on an evening of poetic emotion, whilst from her window she beholds in the sky the piercing and divine eyes of the stars, and in the depths of her virgin heart murmurs the first breath of love. Dickens does not need such a sight for his transport; a stage-coach throws him into dithyrambs; the wheels, the splashing, the cracking whip, the clatter of the horses, harness, the vehicle; here is enough to transport him. . . .

The reader already foresees what vehement emotions this species of imagination will produce. The mode of conception in a man governs the mode of thought. When the mind, barely attentive, follows the indistinct outlines of a rough sketched image, joy and grief glide past him with insensible touch. When the mind, with rapt attention, penetrates the minute details of a precise image, joy and grief shake the whole man. Dickens has this attention, and sees these details: this is why he meets everywhere with objects of exaltation. He never abandons his impassioned tone; he never rests in a natural style and in simple narrative; he only rails or weeps; he writes but satires or elegies. He has the feverish sensibility of a woman who laughs loudly, or melts into tears at the sudden shock of the slightest occurrence. This impassioned style is extremely potent, and to it may be attributed half the glory of Dickens. The majority of men have only weak emotions. We labour mechanically, and yawn much; three-fourths of the things leave us cold; we go to sleep by habit, and we end by ceasing to remark the household scenes, petty details, stale adventures, which are the basis of our existence. A man comes, who suddenly renders them interesting; nay, who makes them dramatic, changes them into objects of admiration, tenderness, and dread. Without leaving the fireside or the omnibus, we are trembling, our eyes full of tears, or shaken by fits of inextinguishable laughter. We are transformed, our life is doubled, our soul had been vegetating; now it feels, suffers, loves. The contrast, the rapid succession, the number of the senti-

ments, add further to its trouble; we are immersed for two hundred pages in a torrent of new emotions, contrary and increasing, which communicates its violence to the mind, which carries it away in digressions and falls, and only casts it on the bank enchanted and exhausted. It is an intoxication, and on a delicate soul the effect would be too forcible; but it suits the English public, and that public has justified it.

This sensibility can hardly have more than two issues —laughter and tears. There are others, but they are only reached by lofty eloquence; they are the path to sublimity, and we have seen that for Dickens this path is cut off. Yet there is no writer who knows better how to touch and melt; he makes us weep, absolutely shed tears; before reading him we did not know there was so much pity in the heart. The grief of a child, who wishes to be loved by his father, and whom his father does not love; the despairing love and slow death of a poor half-imbecile young man: all these pictures of secret grief leave an ineffaceable impression. The tears which he sheds are genuine, and comparison is their only source. Balzac, George Sand, Stendhal have also recorded human miseries; is it possible to write without recording them? But they do not seek them out, they hit upon them; they do not dream of displaying them to us; they were going elsewhere, and met them on their way. They love art better than men. They delight only in setting in motion the springs of passions, in combining large systems of events, in constructing powerful characters: they do not write from sympathy with the wretched, but from love of beauty. When you have finished George Sand's "Mauprat," your emotion is not pure sympathy; you feel, in addition, a deep admiration for the greatness and the generosity of love. When you have come to the end of Balzac's "Le Père Goriot," your heart is bruised by the tortures of that anguish; but the astonishing inventiveness, the accumulation of facts, the abundance of general ideas, the force of analysis, transport you into the world of science, and your painful sympathy is calmed by the spectacle of this physiology of the heart. Dickens never calms our sympathy; he selects subjects in which it alone, and more than elsewhere, is unfolded: the long oppression of [illegible] persecuted and starved by their schoolmaster; the [illegible] factory-hand Stephen, robbed and degraded by

his wife, driven away by his fellows, accused of theft, lingering six days at the bottom of a pit into which he has fallen, maimed, consumed by fever, and dying when he is at length discovered. . . .

This same writer is the most railing, the most comic, the most jocose of English authors. And it is, moreover, a singular gaiety! It is the only kind which would harmonise with this impassioned sensibility. There is a laughter akin to tears. Satire is the sister of elegy: if the second pleads for the oppressed, the first combats the oppressors. Wounded by misfortunes and vices, Dickens avenges himself by ridicule. He does not paint, he punishes. Nothing could be more damaging than those long chapters of sustained irony, in which the sarcasm is pressed, line after line, more sanguinary and piercing in the chosen adversary. There are five or six against the Americans—their bribed newspapers, their drunken journalists, their cheating speculators, their women authors, their coarseness, their familiarity, their insolence, their brutality—enough to captivate an absolutist, and to justify the Liberal who, returning from New York, embraced with tears in his eyes the first gendarme whom he saw on landing at Havre. Foundations of industrial societies, interviews of a member of Parliament and his constituents, instructions of a member of the House of Commons to his secretary, the display of great banking-houses, the laying of the first stone of a public building, every kind of ceremony and lie of English society, are depicted with the fire and bitterness of Hogarth. There are parts where the comic element is so violent, that it has the appearance of a vengeance—as the story of Jonas Chuzzlewit. "The very first word which this excellent boy learnt to spell was gain, and the second (when he came into two syllables) was money." This fine education had unfortunately produced two results: first, that, "having been long taught by his father to overreach everybody, he had imperceptibly acquired a love of overreaching that venerable monitor himself"; secondly, that being taught to regard everything as a matter of property, "he had gradually come to look with impatience on his parent as a certain amount of personal estate," who would be very well "secured" in that particular description of strong-box which is commonly called a coffin, and banked in the grave. "Is that my

father snoring, Pecksniff?" asked Jonas; "tread upon his foot; will you be so good? The foot next you is the gouty one." He is introduced to us with this mark of attention; you may judge of the rest. At bottom, Dickens is gloomy, like Hogarth; but, like Hogarth, he makes us burst with laughter by the buffoonery of his inventions and the violence of his caricatures. He pushes his characters to absurdity with unwonted boldness. Pecksniff hits off moral phrases and sentimental actions so grotesque, that they make him extravagant. Never were heard such monstrous oratorical displays. Sheridan had already painted an English hypocrite, Joseph Surface; but he differs from Pecksniff as much as a portrait of the eighteenth century differs from a cartoon of "Punch." Dickens makes hypocrisy so deformed and monstrous, that his hypocrite ceases to resemble a man; you would call him one of those fantastic figures whose nose is greater than his body. This extravagant comicality springs from excess of imagination. Dickens uses the same spring throughout. The better to make us see the object he shows us, he dazzles the reader's eyes with it; but the reader is amused by this irregular fancy: the fire of the execution makes him forget that the scene is improbable, and he laughs heartily as he listens to the undertaker, Mould, enumerating the consolations which filial piety, well backed by money, may find in his shop.

Usually Dickens remains grave whilst drawing his caricatures. English wit consists in saying light jests in a solemn manner. Tone and ideas are then in contrast; every contrast makes a strong impression. Dickens loves to produce them and his public to hear them.

If at times he forgets to castigate his neighbour, if he tries to sport, to amuse himself, he is no longer happy over it. The element of the English character is its want of happiness. The ardent and tenacious imagination of Dickens is impressed with things too firmly to pass lightly and gaily over the surface. He leans, he penetrates, works into, hollows them out; all these violent actions are efforts, and all efforts are sufferings. To be happy, a man must be light-minded, as a Frenchman of the eighteenth century, or sensual, as an Italian of the sixteenth; a man must not get anxious about things, to enjoy them. Dickens does get anxious and does not enjoy. Take a little comical accident, such as you meet with in the street—a gust of

wind, which blows about the garments of a messenger. Scaramouche will grin with good humour; Lesage smile like a diverted man; both will pass by and think no more of it. Dickens muses over it for half a page. He sees so clearly all the effects of the wind, he puts himself so entirely in its place, he imagines for it a will so impassioned and precise, he shakes the clothes of the poor man hither and thither so violently and so long, he turns the gust into a tempest, into a persecution so great, that we are made giddy; and even whilst we laugh, we feel in ourselves too much emotion and compassion to laugh heartily.

If now you would picture in a glance this imagination —so lucid, so violent, so passionately fixed on the object selected, so deeply touched by little things, so wholly attached to the details and sentiments of vulgar life, so fertile in incessant emotions, so powerful in rousing painful pity, sarcastic raillery, nervous gaiety—you must fancy a London street on a rainy winter's night. The flickering light of the gas dazzles your eyes, streams through the shop windows, floods over the passing forms; and its harsh light, settling upon their contracted features, brings out, with endless detail and damaging force, their wrinkles, deformities, troubled expression. If in this close and dirty crowd you discover the fresh face of a young girl, this artificial light covers it with false and excessive tones; it makes it stand out against the rainy and cold blackness with a strange halo. The mind is struck with wonder; but you carry your hand to your eyes to cover them, and, whilst you admire the force of this light, you involuntarily think of the true country sun and the tranquil beauty of day. . . .

The common people are like the children, dependent, ill-cultivated, akin to nature, and subject to oppression. That is to say, Dickens extols them. That is not new in France; the novels of Eugène Sue have given us more than one example, and the theme is as old as Rousseau; but in the hands of the English writer it has acquired a singular force. His heroes have admirable delicacy and devotion. They have nothing vulgar but their pronunciation; the rest is but nobility and generosity. You see a mountebank abandon his daughter, his only joy, for fear of harming her in any way. A young woman devotes herself to save the unworthy wife of a man who loves her,

and whom she loves; the man dies; she continues, from pure self-sacrifice, to care for the degraded creature. A poor waggoner who thinks his wife unfaithful, loudly pronounces her innocent, and all his vengeance is to think only of loading her with tenderness and kindness. No one, according to Dickens, feels so strongly as they do the happiness of loving and being loved—the pure joys of domestic life. No one has so much compassion for those poor deformed and infirm creatures whom they so often bring into the world, and who seem only born to die. No one has a juster and more inflexible moral sense. I confess even that Dickens's heroes unfortunately resemble the indignant fathers of French melodramas. When old Peggotty learns that his niece is seduced, he sets off, stick in hand, and walks over France, Germany, and Italy, to find her and bring her back to duty. But above all, they have an English sentiment, which fails in Frenchmen: they are Christians. It is not only women, as in France, who take refuge in the idea of another world; men turn also their thoughts towards it. In England, where there are so many sects, and every one chooses his own, each one believes in the religion he has made for himself; and this noble sentiment raises still higher the throne, upon which the uprightness of their resolution and the delicacy of their heart has placed them.

In reality, the novels of Dickens can all be reduced to one phrase, to wit: Be good, and love; there is genuine joy only in the emotions of the heart; sensibility is the whole man. Leave science to the wise, pride to the nobles, luxury to the rich; have compassion on humble wretchedness; the smallest and most despised being may in himself be worth as much as thousands of the powerful and the proud. Take care not to bruise the delicate souls which flourish in all conditions, under all costumes, in all ages. Believe that humanity, pity, forgiveness, are the finest things in man; believe that intimacy, expansion, tenderness, tears, are the finest things in the world. To live is nothing; to be powerful, learned, illustrious, is little; to be useful is not enough. He alone has lived and is a man who has wept at the remembrance of a benefit, given or received.

DICKENS AS A LITERARY ARTIST.

BY

W. TEIGNMOUTH SHORE.

A LITERARY artist must be appraised by his works alone, what he *did* must be considered apart from what he *was*, but although we may not take into account an artist's personality, we must view his work in connection with the times during which he wrote, for every great writer is a child of his time, his individuality is none the less marked because it is to a certain extent formed and restrained by the atmosphere in which he lived.

When Dickens was a boy and when as a very young man he began to write, England was a rougher country than it is now, rougher in manners and in morals, rougher in act and in thought. Comforts that are to-day commonplaces were then luxuries or undreamt of, drunkenness was far from uncommon among the educated and was sadly prevalent among the untaught, executions and prize-fights were looked upon as choice entertainments, the streets of great cities were ill-lit and ill-kept, newspapers were few and expensive, the country was practically undiscovered by the average town-dweller, and intercourse was carried on entirely by coach. The contrast between those days and the sixties and seventies need not be detailed; those days were harder, rougher, more uncomely than our own. But an artist is not affected only by ordinary surroundings, but by the artistic atmosphere of his time, though, owing to his curious education this influence had little bearing on Dickens's work. As a novelist he was scarcely affected by his contemporaries; of Scott, for example, there is no trace in his novels; he, like Thackeray, harked back to the old masters, and—also like Thackeray—Fielding was the writer to whom he was most indebted. Had these two men changed dates, we can imagine that they would have written very much as they have done. Both worked on large canvases, crowded with figures, both were masters of the broadest humour and of the keenest pathos, both hated shams of any kind, and both spoke their minds emphatically and clearly.

Let us first consider Dickens's manner, and then his matter. This is no place to enter upon a discussion of style, for our present purpose it will suffice to define literary good style as ability to express oneself clearly without outraging any of the refinements of language. Judged by this standard, Dickens was a great artist; he could conjure up for us by means of words alone detailed portraits of men and women, and could convey the "atmosphere" of scenery alike in town and country. He was master alike of tragedy, of comedy and of farce, as will be proved by the few brief extracts for which we have space. For tragedy, take these lines from the account of the murder of Nancy by Sikes: "'Bill,' said the girl, in a low voice of alarm, 'why do you look like that at me?' The robber sat regarding her, for a few seconds, with dilated nostrils and heaving breast; and then, grasping her by the head and throat, dragged her into the middle of the room, and looking once towards the door, placed his heavy hand upon her mouth. 'Bill, Bill!' gasped the girl, wrestling with the strength of mortal fear—'I—I won't scream or cry—not once—hear me—speak to me—tell me what I have done!' 'You know, you she-devil!' returned the robber, suppressing his breath. 'You were watched tonight; every word you said was heard.' . . . 'Bill, dear Bill, you cannot have the heart to kill me. . . . I will not loose my hold; you cannot throw me off. Bill, Bill, for dear God's sake, for your own, for mine, stop before you spill my blood! I have been true to you, upon my guilty soul I have!' . . . The housebreaker freed one arm, and grasped his pistol. The certainty of immediate detection if he fired flashed across his mind even in the midst of his fury; and he beat it twice, with all the force he could summon, upon the upturned face that almost touched his own. She staggered and fell, nearly blinded with the blood that rained down from a deep gash in her forehead; but raising herself, with difficulty, on her knees, drew from her bosom a white handkerchief—Rose Maylie's own—and holding it up in her folded hands, as high towards heaven as her feeble strength would allow, breathed one prayer for mercy to her Maker. It was a ghastly figure to look upon. The murderer, staggering backwards to the wall, and shutting out the sight with his hand, seized a heavy club and struck her down." This passage shows Dickens's

power and his weakness; the physical horror of the scene is fully set before the reader, the wild-beast ferocity of Sikes, the helplessness of Nancy, but the touch about the handkerchief and the prayer is theatrical; under the circumstances the girl would have been too crushed with fear to think of anything else than escape or a struggle for life.

For comedy, turn to Stave One of "A Christmas Carol": "Marley was dead, to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it. And Scrooge's name was good upon 'Change for anything he chose to put his hand to. . . .

Oh! but he was a tight-fisted hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas"—here we must stop, but could quote almost the whole of this admirable story as exemplification of Dickens's mastery of comedy.

Of farce it is unnecessary to give examples; almost might "Pickwick" be quoted in its entirety. Dickens could convey an impressive sense of loneliness and horror in his descriptions of scenery; we have only room for two short specimens; the first from "Martin Chuzzlewit"; "The day was dawning from a patch of watery light in the east, and sullen clouds came driving up before it, from which the rain descended in a thick, wet mist. It streamed from every twig and bramble in the hedge, made little gullies in the path, ran down a hundred channels in the road, and punched innumerable holes into the face of every pond and gutter. It fell with an oozy, slushy sound among the grass, and made a muddy kennel of every furrow in the ploughed fields. No living creature was anywhere to be seen. The prospect could hardly have been more desolate

if animated nature had been dissolved in water, and poured down again upon the earth in that form." Is not the effect excellent and clean-cut? This, too, from "Our Mutual Friend"—they are searching for the body of Gaffer Hexam in the night on the river: "They were all shivering, and everything about them seemed to be shivering; the river itself, craft, rigging, sails, such early smoke as there yet was on the shore. Black with wet, and altered to the eye by white patches of hail and sleet, the huddled buildings looked lower than usual, as if they were cowering, and had shrunk with the cold. Very little life was to be seen on either bank, windows and doors were shut, and the staring black-and-white letters upon wharves and warehouses 'looked,' said Eugene to Mortimer, 'like inscriptions over the graves of dead businesses.' . . . And everything so vaunted the spoiling influences of water—discoloured copper, rotten wood, honeycombed stone, green dank deposit"—and so on until the reader shudders and forgets that he is reading fiction. That is the whole art of story-telling, to make that which is not appear to exist, to influence us so that we sympathise with the joys and sorrows of beings who never lived save in the mind's eye of the writer. This art Dickens practised to perfection and his style was an admirable instrument in his hands. It was not always polished, it was sometimes marred by overemphasis and by theatricality, but taken as a whole it enabled him to express himself clearly and forcibly.

There are some writers of fiction who depend entirely upon the intricacies and artfulness of the plots of their novels, such for example as Wilkie Collins; others who take little heed of plot, interesting us by the brilliance of their character-drawing, their pathos, their humour, their wit, such writers as Thackeray; a third class who interest us by plot and by characters, such as Fielding and Scott. Dickens must be classed with his great contemporary Thackeray. It need scarcely be pointed out that something of plot is necessary in every work of fiction; the characters of the book must be shown growing and developing as the conduct of the tale moves forward, otherwise the fiction would lose its hold upon the reader just as life would do upon the observant if time and tide stood still. Dickens was aware that plot was his weakest point; it was his nature to write—so to speak—from hand to mouth, he felt

that his characters were alive, he trusted to his apparently inexhaustible imagination; he set out with a general idea of what would be the fate of his personages, and wrote on from chapter to chapter confident that something amusing or interesting would happen—and it usually did happen. That was his way, and it is best for a genius to have his way; a cut-and-dried plot would probably have hampered Dickens, apparently to a certain extent did so on certain occasions when he endeavoured to follow out a set scheme. It is sufficient for us that we can read his tales with interest and follow the fortunes of his characters with sympathy and delight.

The accusation most generally brought against Dickens is that of exaggeration. It is said that his comic characters are caricatures, that his pathos is shoddy and his humour mere farce. Such an accusation is difficult to combat because of its very untruth—as a whole. Some of Dickens's characters are caricatures—but caricature is a legitimate form of art. Shakespeare himself would gladly plead guilty to this accusation. Dickens's pathos does not always ring true; it is a weakness, but one vice should not be allowed to pull down the balance against a hundred virtues; it may be admitted—and we think must be—that the deaths of little Nell and of Paul Dombey belong to the realm of melodrama rather than that of tragedy, but this admission does not weaken the splendid strength of the account of the last days of Dora in "David Copperfield," or of the story of Tom Pinch and his sister in "Martin Chuzzlewit," or—to take an oft-forgotten example—of the pathetic prison scenes in "Pickwick." His humour is often farce, is meant to be so, and as farce is usually of the best; but it is not always farce, being often very tender and very sweet. In fact, those who do not like Dickens's work are apt to fall into the old critical mistake of saying "*I* do not like thee, therefore thou art not likable." Dickens enchanted his contemporaries, he enchants the majority of us still; it is useless to say that he is no magician, or that he is a master of black not of white magic.

Dickens's chiefest gift was that of characterisation, and no English writer, with the exception of Shakespeare, has drawn so many characters which have become "household words." His satirical portraits chiefly linger in our memory, such as Stiggins, Mrs. Gamp, Podsnap, Pecksniff,

Bumble; but how many others there are, Pickwick, Jingle, Sam Weller, Tony Weller, the Fat Boy, Snodgrass, Winkle, Tupman, Mrs. Bardell, Bob Sawyer, Dodson and Fogg, from one work alone! It is in humorous and satirical portraiture that Dickens achieved his greatest successes; his serious folk sometimes strike the reader as somewhat lifeless; they are always drawn with care, but the effort is too often visible. Sydney Carton, in "A Tale of Two Cities," cannot be counted as altogether successful. On the other hand, Mr. Crisparkle in "Edwin Drood" is altogether admirable. It is, however, in such portraits as those of Mr Dombey and Carker, in "Dombey and Son," of Ralph Nickleby, Bradley Headstone, in "Our Mutual Friend," Mrs. Clennam, in "Little Dorrit," Miss Havisham, in "Great Expectations," and Sir Leicester Dedlock, in "Bleak House," that failure is most apparent; Dickens did not *know* them, he had only *seen* them, could not therefore draw more for us than their outward appearance and their tricks of manner; they are dolls, not human beings, and their joints are stiff. On the other hand, Dickens has given the world some of its most charming little women, notably Bella Wilfer, in "Our Mutual Friend," and Dora, in "David Copperfield." Lizzie Hexam stands out finely in contrast to Bella; they are both not types but examples of English girls, finely conceived and finely executed. When we seek the cause of his failures, we find that Dickens was unsuccessful as a rule when he tried to depict men and women of heroic or of abnormal passions; tragedy in his hands too often became stagy; he brought to the novel the methods of the drama, clenched teeth, quivering lips, blanched cheeks, apostrophes to Heaven and Hell, and so forth, forgetting—or not realising—that what will look natural beneath the glare of the footlights will appear far from natural in the searching light of the open air. The gentle pathos of every-day life was his to command; the heights of passion usually lay beyond his reach; though terror and horror he could paint with powerful brush.

But to appreciate his true greatness we must turn to his comic and satiric characters, of which we have already made some mention. It is chiefly against these that the charge of exaggeration has been levelled, for the most part by those who fail to understand that exaggeration is the essence of comedy and that satire without caricature is

hing worth. A comic character drawn with absolute, listic fidelity ceases to be comic; imagine Falstaff or s. Gamp so drawn; they would be loathsome instead of ghable. It is the province of the literary artist, as of pictorial, to select, not merely to reproduce. Or again, agine Polonius or Mr. Pecksniff portrayed to the life; w unutterably they would bore us! Take these charac-s as Shakespeare and Dickens have drawn them for us; ey are none the less living, none the less lifelike because rtain phases have been coloured more highly in their por-aits than they were in nature, because various high lights ve been strengthened and various shadows lightened.

To survey in detail the almost numberless comic char-ters in Dickens's novels would be a lengthy though profi-ble task, but we may devote a short space to notice some f the characteristics which run through many of them. n his satire he is always just; he never mocks at any man r his belief, so long as that man is honest and acts up to is creed; but for the humbug and the canter he has no ity. No man was more reverent in religious matters than Dickens, no man realised more fully than he the value of he temperance movement; it was because of this in him hat he drew Stiggins and mocked at those who hurt the ause of temperance by their intemperance. His satire was frequently directed against what he believed to be crying evils in social and administrative life, and that this satire was just has been fully proved by the changes which have been made since his day.

There was nothing in man or woman that so caught Dickens's fancy, that he so loved to reproduce, as eccentricity of manner or of thought. Quaint characteristics in his own parents inspired him with two of his most delightful creations, Mr. Micawber and Mrs. Nickleby. Dick Swiveller and the Marchioness are equal triumphs, so are Mr. Mantalini, Peggotty, Captain Cuttle, Mr. Boffin, Joe Gargery—his pages teem with such. They are all distinct, even those who at first meeting appear to be alike grow separate in our minds as we learn to know them—for instance, Joe Gargery and Mr. Peggotty—and this end can only be achieved by a very great writer; nature turns out no two men or women who are duplicates, nor does a writer of genius.

Dickens could see into a child's heart, could see things

with a child's eyes and understood the wonder that fills a child's mind; he has drawn for us some of the most truthful pictures of childhood and, inexplicable mystery, some of the most untrue. It is almost heresy to write it, but little Nell and Paul Dombey are not living children but dolls; Oliver Twist is little more lifelike; to counterbalance them we have a many, David Copperfield, Pip, Tiny Tim, the children at the Holly Tree Inn. Perhaps it is that taint of theatricality again; Dickens permitted his feelings to run away with his pen. Nell and Paul upon the stage, with limelight on them, might possibly touch our hearts; in cold black and white they make us shudder at their unreality. Yet it is only fair to note that to many these two children are very real and very pathetic, and the truth probably is this, that Dickens conceived them aright, and put them on paper so that some can grasp at and secure what he meant, while others cannot; to some they are shadow, to some substance; but even so Dickens did not attain to full success, for he should have so written as to have been understood of all people.

As in the case of all great writers of fiction, Dickens was a combination of idealist and realist; the one without the other cannot give us any true picture of life and of humanity. He was gifted with the keenest sympathy with all those who suffer, and could share in all hearty, honest mirth. He loved his fellow men and women; he could put himself in another's place, appreciate the fact that his outlook on life was not the only one. His limitations as an artist we have touched upon; had he had no limitations he had not been a man. Writers must be judged by their gifts, not by their limitations, by what they have done of good, when well-done preponderates over ill-done; so weighed in the critical balance it is impossible to deny that Charles Dickens stands very high among our great writers of fiction.

In addition to tests critical, a writer of fiction may be judged by the marks he has left upon matters of fact. As in this way: Who that has read "David Copperfield" does not, when visiting Yarmouth or Canterbury, or when walking in and around Charing Cross, think of those characters in that story who visited or dwelt there? think of them not as figments but as facts, not as shadows of the imagination but as ghosts of men and women who lived, moved,

and had their being? It is said that the majority of our American cousins who visit the Charterhouse in London show no other curiosity than to see the seat in the chapel once occupied by Colonel Newcome. So with those who have read Dickens. Especially so is this of London; few men, if any, can have known the metropolis more fully than did he, no one has drawn it for us with such persuasive skill. The very atmosphere of London breathes through his writings; in all its aspects he knew it, in fair weather and in foul, by day and by night, and of the character of its inhabitants his knowledge was more "extensive and peculiar" even than Sam Weller's of a certain class of house of entertainment. No other writer that we know has painted such London landscapes as he did; no other —save Shakespeare—peopled its streets and houses with so many familiar faces; no other so made London his own province. Of the country and of country towns and of country life he gave us many admirable pictures, but of London he told us all that he knew, told us more than any other man had to tell.

Another test of living art is that it does not die of old age, does not even grow old-fashioned or out of date. To take only English examples, when we read Shakespeare, Addison, Fielding, Miss Austen, Thackeray, though occasionally a custom or a word may strike us as quaint, we are not checked in our interest by any sense of the fact that the book in our hands was written many a year ago. May we not fairly add Dickens to that fine company? "Pickwick" has, perchance, now and again an old-world flavour, but then its fun depends upon a humorous view of manners rather than of human nature. But his other works are fresh and sweet, there is no musty savour in them, they are alive, not dead.

It may be urged that it is unnecessary to labour the point that Dickens was a great writer; of itself solely this is so, but in drawing attention to his greatness we have perforce had to show wherein he was great.

Dickens said of himself: "I think it is my infirmity to fancy or perceive relations in things which are not apparent generally." Yes, that explains much both in Dickens and other writers which is apt to be misunderstood, to be written down as exaggeration or as totally untruthful. A man such as he sees with the eyes of genius, sees

very much in the world of men and women to which our eyes are blind, or rather which we cannot see until it is shown to us. He continues: "Also, I have such an inexpressible enjoyment of what I see in a droll light, that I dare say I pet it as if it were a spoilt child." But he saw nothing droll in things unseemly; his humour was clean and wholesome, and it is matter for gratitude that he did perceive drollery where most men see only dulnesses, that his nature was sunny, not shadowed. His humour was spontaneous; he could laugh at his own jokes as all great jesters can, because the joke sprang as fresh upon him in the first instance as on the written page it did upon his readers.

How can we sum up or appraise the art of Dickens? To compare one writer with another is futile, each artist has his own merits and demerits, which cannot be weighed by balancing them against those of others. Nor are there any fixed canons of literary criticism. Popularity during his lifetime is of little value as a test of an author's ability; popularity with the generations that follow comes to few writers and to only those who are great enough to get at the heart of things, at the heart of happiness, at the heart of sorrow; whose humour and pathos are based upon insight into and knowledge of human nature. That popularity is undeniably Dickens's portion. But literary popularity may be said to be of two sorts, some writers are popular with the critical, some with those who are not so, a few—the greatest—are popular with both; such writers as Shakespeare, Goldsmith, Scott, and Dickens. These men have stood, in varying degrees, the test of time and have satisfied the taste of the critical. But to compare them one with another or to endeavour to place them in order of merit is mere waste of effort. They were great men; let that suffice and let us be thankful.

THE MASTER OF FICTION.

BY

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE.

It is only when such names as Shakespeare's or Hugo's rise and remain as the supreme witnesses of what was highest in any particular country at any particular time that there can be no question among any but irrational and impudent men as to the supremacy of their greatest. England, under the reign of Dickens, had other great names to boast of which may well be allowed to challenge the sovereignty of his genius. But as there certainly was no Shakespeare and no Hugo to rival and eclipse his glory, he will probably and naturally always be accepted and acclaimed as the greatest Englishman of his generation. His first works or attempts at work gave little more promise of such a future than if he had been a Coleridge or a Shelley. No one could have foreseen what all may now foresee in the "Sketches by Boz"—not only a quick and keen-eyed observer, "a chiel amang us takin' notes" more notable than Captain Grose's, but a great creative genius. Nor could any one have foreseen it in the early chapters of "Pickwick"—which, at their best, do better the sort of thing which had been done fairly well before. Sam Weller and Charles Dickens came to life together, immortal and twin-born. In "Oliver Twist" the quality of a great tragic and comic poet or dramatist in prose fiction was for the first time combined with the already famous qualities of a great humorist and a born master in the arts of narrative and dialogue.

Like the early works of all other great writers whose critical contemporaries have failed to elude the kindly chance of beneficent oblivion, the early works of Dickens have been made use of to depreciate his later, with the same enlightened and impartial candour which on the appearance of "Othello" must doubtless have deplored the steady though gradual decline of its author's genius from the unfulfilled promise of excellence held forth by "Two Gentlemen of Verona." There may possibly be some faint and flickering shadow of excuse for the dullards, if un-

malignant, who prefer "Nicholas Nickleby" to the riper and sounder fruits of the same splendid and inexhaustible genius. Admirable as it is, full of life and sap and savour, the strength and the weakness of youth are so singularly mingled in the story and the style that readers who knew nothing of its date might naturally have assumed that it must have been the writer's first attempt at fiction. There is perhaps no question which would more thoroughly test the scholarship of the student than this: What do you know of Jane Dibabs and Horatio Peltiogrus? At fourscore and ten it might be thought "too late a week" for a reader to revel with insuppressible delight in a first reading of the chapters which enrol all worthy readers in the company of Mr. Vincent Crummles; but I can bear witness to the fact that this effect was produced on a reader of that age who had earned honour and respect in public life, affection and veneration in private. It is not, on the other hand, less curious and significant that Sydney Smith, who had held out against Sam Weller, should have been conquered by Miss Squeers; that her letter, which of all Dickens's really good things is perhaps the most obviously imitative and suggestive of its model, should have converted so great an elder humorist to appreciation of a greater than himself; that the echo of familiar fun, an echo from the grave of Smollett, should have done what finer and more original strokes of comic genius had unaccountably failed to do. But in all criticism of such work the merely personal element of the critic, the natural atmosphere in which his mind or his insight works, and uses its faculties of appreciation, is really the first and last thing to be taken into account.

No mortal man or woman, no human boy or girl, can resist the fascination of Mr. and Mrs. Quilp, of Mr. and Miss Brass, of Mr. Swiveller and his Marchioness; but even the charm of Mrs. Jarley and her surroundings, the magic which enthrals us in the presence of a Codlin and a Short, cannot mesmerise or hypnotise us into belief that the story of "The Old Curiosity Shop" is in any way a good story. But it is the first book in which the background or setting is often as impressive as the figures which can hardly be detached from it in our remembered impression of the whole design. From Quilp's Wharf to Plashwater Weir Mill Lock, the river belongs to Dickens

by right of conquest or creation. The part it plays in more than a few of his books is indivisible from the parts played in them by human actors beside it or upon it. Of such actors in this book, the most famous as an example of her creator's power as a master of pathetic tragedy would thoroughly deserve her fame if she were but a thought more human and more credible. "The child" has never a touch of childhood about her; she is an impeccable and invariable portent of devotion, without a moment's lapse into the humanity of frailty in temper or in conduct. Dickens might as well have fitted her with a pair of wings at once. A woman might possibly be as patient, as resourceful, as indefatigable in well-doing and as faultless in perception of the right thing to do; it would be difficult to make her deeply interesting, but she might be made more or less of an actual creature. But a child whom nothing can ever irritate, whom nothing can ever baffle, whom nothing can ever misguide, whom nothing can ever delude, and whom nothing can ever dismay, is a monster as inhuman as a baby with two heads.

Outside the class which excludes all but the highest masterpieces of poetry it is difficult to find or to imagine a faultless work of creation—in other words, a faultless work of fiction; but the story of "Barnaby Rudge" can hardly, in common justice, be said to fall short of this crowning praise. And in this book, even if not in any of its precursors, an appreciative reader must recognise a quality of humour which will remind him of Shakespeare, and perhaps of Aristophanes. The impetuous and irrepressible volubility of Miss Miggs, when once her eloquence breaks loose and finds vent like raging water or fire, is powerful enough to overbear for the moment any slight objection which a severe morality might suggest with respect to the rectitude and propriety of her conduct. . . . To have made malignity as delightful for an instant as simplicity, and Miss Miggs as enchanting as Mrs. Quickly or Mrs. Gamp, is an unsurpassable triumph of dramatic humour.

But the advance in tragic power is even more notable and memorable than this. The pathos, indeed, is too cruel; the tortures of the idiot's mother and the murderer's wife are so fearful that interest and sympathy are well-nigh superseded or overbalanced by a sense of horror rather than of pity, magnificent as is the power of

dramatic invention which animates every scene in every stage of her martyrdom. Dennis is the first of those consummate and wonderful ruffians, with two vile faces under one frowsy hood, whose captain or commander-in-chief is Rogue Riderhood; more fearful by far, though not (one would hope) more natural, than Henriet Cousin, who could hardly breathe when fastening the rope round Esmeralda's neck, "tant la chose l'apitoyait"; a divine touch of surviving humanity which would have been impossible to the more horrible hangman whose mortal agony in immediate prospect of the imminent gallows is as terribly memorable as anything in the tragedy of fiction or the poetry of prose. His fellow-hangbird is a figure no less admirable throughout all his stormy and fiery career till the last moment; and then he drops into poetry. Nor is it poetry above the reach of Silas Wegg which "invokes the curse of all its victims on that black tree, of which he is the ripened fruit." The writer's impulse was noble; but its expression or its effusion is such as indifference may deride and sympathy must deplore. Twice only did the greatest English writer of his day make use of history as a background or a stage for fiction; the use made of it in "Barnaby Rudge" is even more admirable in the lifelike tragedy and the terrible comedy of its presentation than the use made of it in "A Tale of Two Cities."

Dickens was doubtless right in his preference of "David Copperfield" to all his other masterpieces; it is only among dunces that it is held improbable or impossible for a great writer to judge aright of his own work at its best, to select and to prefer the finest and the fullest example of his active genius; but, when all deductions have been made from the acknowledgment due to the counter-claim of "Martin Chuzzlewit," the fact remains that in that unequal and irregular masterpiece his comic and his tragic genius rose now and then to the very highest pitch of all. No son of Adam and no daughter of Eve on this God's earth, as his occasional friend Mr. Carlyle might have expressed it, could have imagined it possible—humanly possible—for anything in later comedy to rival the unspeakable perfection of Mrs. Quickly's eloquence at its best; at such moments as when her claim to be acknowledged as Lady Falstaff was reinforced, if not by the spiritual authority of Master Dumb, by the correlative evidence of

Mrs. Keech; but no reader above the level of intelligence which prefers to Shakespeare the Parisian Ibsen and the Norwegian Sardou can dispute the fact that Mrs. Gamp has once and again risen even to that unimaginable supremacy of triumph.

At the first interview vouchsafed to us with the adorable Sairey, we feel that no words can express our sense of the divinely altruistic and devoted nature which finds utterance in the sweetly and sublimely simple words—"If I could afford to lay all my feller creeturs out for nothink, I would gladly do it; sich is the love I bear 'em." We think of little Tommy Harris, and the little red worsted shoe gurgling in his throat; of the previous occasion when his father sought shelter and silence in an empty dog-kennel; of that father's immortally infamous reflection on the advent of his ninth; of religious feelings, of life, and the end of all things; of Mr. Gamp, his wooden leg, and their precious boy; of her calculations and her experiences with reference to birth and death; of her views as to the expediency of travel by steam, which anticipated Ruskin's and those of later dissenters from the gospel of hurry and the religion of mechanism; of the contents of Mrs. Harris's pocket; of the incredible incredulity of the infidel Mrs. Prig; we think of all this, and of more than all this, and acknowledge with infinite thanksgiving of inexhaustible laughter and of rapturous admiration the very greatest comic poet or creator that ever lived to make the life of other men more bright and more glad and more perfect than ever, without his beneficent influence, it possibly or imaginably could have been.

The advance in power of tragic invention, the increased strength in grasp of character and grip of situation, which distinguishes "Chuzzlewit" from "Nickleby," may be tested by comparison of the leading villains. Ralph Nickleby might almost have walked straight off the boards on which the dramatic genius of his nephew was employed to bring into action two tubs and a pump: Jonas Chuzzlewit has his place of eminence for ever among the most memorable types of living and breathing wickedness that ever were stamped and branded with immortality by the indignant genius of a great and unrelenting master. Neither Vautrin nor Thénardier has more of evil and of deathless life in him.

It is not only by his masterpieces, it is also by his inferior works or even by his comparative failures that the greatness of a great writer may be reasonably judged and tested. We can measure in some degree the genius of Thackeray by the fact that "Pendennis," with all its marvellous wealth of character and humour and living truth, has never been and never will be rated among his very greatest works. "Dombey and Son" cannot be held nearly so much of a success as "Pendennis." I have known a man of the very highest genius and the most fervent enthusiasm for that of Dickens who never could get through it. There is nothing of a story, and all that nothing (to borrow a phrase from Martial) is bad. The Roman starveling had nothing to lose, and lost it all: the story of Dombey has no plot, and that a very stupid one. The struttingly offensive father and his gushingly submissive daughter are failures of the first magnitude. Little Paul is a more credible child than little Nell; he sometimes forgets that he is foredoomed by a more than Pauline or Calvinistic law of predestination to die in the odour of sentiment, and says or thinks or does something really and quaintly childlike. But we get, to say the least, a good deal of him; and how much too little do we get of Jack Bunsby! Not so very much more than of old Bill Barley; and yet those two ancient mariners are berthed for ever in the inmost shrine of our affections. Another patch of the very brightest purple sewn into the sometimes rather threadbare stuff or groundwork of the story is the scene in which the dissolution of a ruined household is so tragicomically set before us in the breaking up of the servants' hall. And when we think upon the cherished names of Toots and Nipper, Gills and Cuttle, Rob the Grinder and good Mrs. Brown, we are tempted to throw conscience to the winds, and affirm that the book is a good book.

But even if we admit that here was an interlude of comparative failure, we cannot but feel moved to acclaim with all the more ardent gratitude the appearance of the next and perhaps the greatest gift bestowed on us by this magnificent and immortal benefactor. "David Copperfield," from the first chapter to the last, is unmistakable by any eye above the level and beyond the insight of a beetle's as one of the masterpieces to which time can only add a new charm and an unimaginable value. The narrative is

as coherent and harmonious as that of "Tom Jones"; and to say this is to try it by the very highest and apparently the most unattainable standard. But I must venture to reaffirm my conviction that even the glorious masterpiece of Fielding's radiant and beneficent genius, if in some points superior, is by no means superior in all. Tom is a far completer and more living type of gallant boyhood and generous young manhood than David; but even the lustre of Partridge is pallid and lunar beside the noontide glory of Micawber. Blifil is a more poisonously plausible villain than Uriah: Sophia Western remains unequalled except by her sister heroine Amelia as a perfectly credible and adorable type of young English womanhood, naturally "like one of Shakespeare's women," socially as fine and true a lady as Congreve's Millament or Angelica. But even so large-minded and liberal a genius as Fielding's could never have conceived any figure like Miss Trotwood's, any group like that of the Peggottys. As easily could it have imagined and realised the magnificent setting of the story, with its homely foreground of street or wayside and its background of tragic sea.

The perfect excellence of this masterpiece has perhaps done some undeserved injury to the less impeccable works of genius which immediately succeeded it. But in "Bleak House" the daring experiment of combination or alternation which divides a story between narrative in the third person and narrative in the first is justified and vindicated by its singular and fascinating success. Esther's narrative is as good as her creator's; and no enthusiasm of praise could overrate the excellence of them both. For wealth and variety of character none of the master's works can be said to surpass and few can be said to equal it. When all necessary allowance has been made for occasional unlikeliness in detail or questionable methods of exposition, the sustained interest and the terrible pathos of Lady Dedlock's tragedy will remain unaffected and unimpaired. Any reader can object that a lady visiting a slum in the disguise of a servant would not have kept jewelled rings on her fingers for the inspection of a crossing-sweeper, or that a less decorous and plausible way of acquainting her with the fact that a scandalous episode in her early life was no longer a secret for the family lawyer could hardly have been imagined than the public narrative of her story

in her own drawing-room by way of an evening's entertainment for her husband and their guests. To these objections, which any Helot of culture whose brain may have been affected by habitual indulgence in the academic delirium of self-complacent superiority may advance or may suggest with the most exquisite infinity of impertinence, it may be impossible to retort an equally obvious and inconsiderable objection.

But to a far more serious charge, which even now appears to survive the confutation of all serious evidence, it is incomprehensible and inexplicable that Dickens should have returned no better an answer than he did. Harold Skimpole was said to be Leigh Hunt; a rascal after the order of Wainewright, without the poisoner's comparatively and diabolically admirable audacity of frank and fiendish self-esteem, was assumed to be meant for a portrait or a caricature of an honest man and a man of unquestionable genius. To this most serious and most disgraceful charge Dickens merely replied that he never anticipated the identification of the rascal Skimpole with the fascinating Harold—the attribution of imaginary villainy to the original model who suggested or supplied a likeness for the externally amiable and ineffectually accomplished lounger and shuffler through life. The simple and final reply should have been that indolence was the essential quality of the character and conduct and philosophy of Skimpole—"a perfectly idle man: a mere amateur," as he describes himself to the sympathetic and approving Sir Leicester; that Leigh Hunt was one of the hardest and steadiest workers on record, throughout a long and chequered life, at the toilsome trade of letters; and therefore that to represent him as a heartless and shameless idler would have been about as rational an enterprise, as lifelike a design after the life, as it would have been to represent Shelley as a gluttonous and canting hypocrite or Byron as a loyal and unselfish friend. And no one as yet, I believe, has pretended to recognise in Mr. Jarndyce a study from Byron, in Mr. Chadband a libel on Shelley.

Of the two shorter novels which would suffice to preserve for ever the fame of Dickens, some readers will as probably always prefer "Hard Times" as others will prefer "A Tale of Two Cities." The latter of these is doubtless the most ingeniously and dramatically invented and

constructed of all the master's works; the earlier seems to me the greater in moral and pathetic and humorous effect. The martyr workman, beautiful as is the study of his character and terrible as is the record of his tragedy, is almost too spotless a sufferer and a saint; the lifelong lapidation of this unluckier Stephen is somewhat too consistent and insistent and persistent for any record but that of a martyrology; but the obdurate and histrionic affectation which animates the brutality and stimulates the selfishness of Mr. Bounderby is only too lamentably truer and nearer to the unlovely side of life. Mr. Ruskin—a name never to be mentioned without reverence—thought otherwise; but in knowledge and insight into character and ethics that nobly minded man of genius was no more comparable to Dickens than in sanity of ardour and rationality of aspiration for progressive and practical reform.

As a social satirist Dickens is usually considered to have shown himself at his weakest; the curious and seemingly incorrigible ignorance which imagined that the proper title of Sir John Smith's wife was Lady John Smith, and that the same noble peer could be known to his friends and parasites alternately as Lord Jones and Lord James Jones, may naturally make us regret the absence from their society of our old Parisian friend Sir Brown, Esquire; but though such singular designations as these were never rectified or removed from the text of "Nicholas Nickleby," and though a Lady Kew was as far outside the range of his genius as a Madame Marneffe, his satire of social pretension and pretence was by no means always "a sword-stroke in the water" or a flourish in the air. Mrs. Sparsit is as typical and immortal as any figure of Molière's; and the fact that Mr. Sparsit was a Powler is one which can never be forgotten. . . .

The conception of "Little Dorrit" was far happier and more promising than that of "Dombey and Son"; which indeed is not much to say for it. Mr. Dombey is a doll; Mr. Dorrit is an everlasting figure of comedy in its most tragic aspect and tragedy in its most comic phase. Little Dorrit herself might be less untruly than unkindly described as little Nell grown big, or, in Milton's phrase, writ large. But on that very account she is a more credible and therefore a more really and rationally pathetic figure. The incomparable incoherence of the parts which

pretend in vain to compose the incomposite story may be gauged by the collapse of some of them and the vehement hurry of cramped and halting invention which huddles up the close of it without an attempt at the rational and natural evolution of others. It is like a child's dissected map with some of the counties or kingdoms missing. Much, though certainly not all, of the humour is of the poorest kind possible to Dickens; and the reiterated repetition of comic catchwords and tragic illustrations of character is such as to affect the nerves no less than the intelligence of the reader with irrepressible irritation. But this, if he be wise, will be got over and kept under by his sense of admiration and of gratitude for the unsurpassable excellence of the finest passages and chapters. The day after the death of Mr. Merdle is one of the most memorable dates in all the record of creative history—or to use one word in place of two, in all the record of fiction. The fusion of humour and horror in the marvellous chapter which describes it is comparable only with the kindred work of such creators as the authors of "Les Misérables" and "King Lear." And nothing in the work of Balzac is newer and truer and more terrible than the relentless yet not unmerciful evolution of the central figure in the story. The Father of the Marshalsea is so pitiably worthy of pity as well as of scorn that it would have seemed impossible to heighten or to deepen the contempt or the compassion of the reader; but when he falls from adversity to prosperity he succeeds in soaring down and sinking up to a more tragicomic ignominy of more aspiring degradation. And his end is magnificent.

It must always be interesting as well as curious to observe the natural attitude of mind, the inborn instinct of intelligent antipathy or sympathy, discernible or conjecturable in the greatest writer of any nation at any particular date, with regard to the characteristic merits or demerits of foreigners. Dickens was once most unjustly taxed with injustice to the French, by an evidently loyal and cordial French critic, on the ground that the one Frenchman of any mark in all his books was a murderer. The polypseudonymous ruffian who uses and wears out as many stolen names as ever did even the most cowardly and virulent of literary poisoners is doubtless an unlovely figure: but not even Mr. Peggotty and his infant niece are

painted with more tender and fervent sympathy than the good Corporal and little Bebelle. Hugo could not—even omnipotence has its limits—have given a more perfect and living picture of a hero and a child. I wish I could think he would have given it as the picture of an English hero and an English child. But I do think the Italian readers of "Little Dorrit" ought to appreciate and to enjoy the delightful and admirable personality of Cavalletto. Mr. Baptist in Bleeding Hart Yard is as attractively memorable a figure as his excellent friend Signor Panco. . . .

Among the highest landmarks of success ever reared for immortality by the triumphant genius of Dickens, the story of "Great Expectations" must for ever stand eminent beside that of "David Copperfield." These are his great twin masterpieces. Great as they are, there is nothing in them greater than the very best things in some of his other books: there is certainly no person preferable and there is possibly no person comparable to Samuel Weller or to Sarah Gamp. Of the two childish and boyish autobiographers, David is the better little fellow though not the more lifelike little friend; but of all first chapters is there any comparable for impression and for fusion of humour and terror and pity and fancy and truth to that which confronts the child with the convict on the marshes in the twilight? And the story is incomparably the finer story of the two; there can be none superior, if there be any equal to it, in the whole range of English fiction. And except in "Vanity Fair" and "The Newcomes," if even they may claim exception, there can surely be found no equal or nearly equal number of living and everliving figures. The tragedy and the comedy, the realism and the dreamery of life, are fused or mingled together with little less than Shakespearean strength and skill of hand. To have created Abel Magwitch is to be a god indeed among the creators of deathless men. Pumblechook is actually better and droller and truer to imaginative life than Pecksniff: Joe Gargery is worthy to have been praised and loved at once by Fielding and by Sterne: Mr. Jaggers and his clients, Mr. Wemmick and his parent and his bride, are such figures as Shakespeare, when dropping out of poetry, might have created, if his lot had been cast in a later century. Can as much be said for the creatures of any other man or god? The ghastly tragedy of Miss

Havisham could only have been made at once credible and endurable by Dickens; he alone could have reconciled the strange and sordid horror with the noble and pathetic survival of possible emotion and repentance. And he alone could have eluded condemnation for so gross an oversight as the escape from retribution of so important a criminal as the "double murderer and monster" whose baffled or inadequate attempts are enough to make Bill Sikes seem comparatively the gentlest and Jonas Chuzzlewit the most amiable of men. I remember no such flaw in any other story I ever read. But in this story it may well have been allowed to pass unrebuked and unobserved; which yet I think it should not.

This was the author's last great work: the defects in it are as nearly imperceptible as spots on the sun or shadows on a sunlit sea. His last long story, "Our Mutual Friend," superior as it is in harmony and animation to "Little Dorrit" or "Dombey and Son," belongs to the same class of piebald or rather skewbald fiction. . . . Of this book it might justly be said that the genius of the author ebbs and flows with the disappearance and the reappearance of the Thames.

That unfragrant and insanitary waif of its rottenest refuse, the incomparable Rogue Riderhood, must always hold a chosen place among the choicest villains of our selectest acquaintance. When the genius of his immortal creator said "Let there be Riderhood," and there was Riderhood, a figure of coequal immortality rose reeking and skulking into sight. The deliciously amphibious nature of the venomous human reptile is so wonderfully preserved in his transference from Southwark Bridge to Plashwater Weir Mill Lockhouse that we feel it impossible for imagination to detach the water-snake from the water, the water-rat from the mud. There is a horrible harmony, a hellish consistency, in the hideous part he takes in the martyrdom of Betty Higden—the most nearly intolerable tragedy in all the tragic work of Dickens. Even the unsurpassed and unsurpassable grandeur and beauty of the martyred old heroine's character can hardly make the wonderful record of her heroic agony endurable by those who have been so tenderly and so powerfully compelled to love and to revere her. The divine scene in the children's hospital is something that could only have been conceived

and that could only have been realised by two of the greatest among writers and creators: it is a curious and memorable thing that they should have shown upon our sight together.

We can only guess what manner of tribute Victor Hugo might have paid to Dickens on reading how Johnny "bequeathed all he had to dispose of, and arranged his affairs in this world." But a more incomparable scene than this is the resurrection of Rogue Riderhood. That is one of the very greatest works of any creator who ever revealed himself as a master of fiction: a word, it should be unnecessary to repeat, synonymous with the word creation. The terrible humour of it holds the reader entranced alike at the first and the hundredth reading. And the blatant boobies who deny truthfulness and realism to the imagination or the genius of Dickens, because it never condescended or aspired to wallow in metaphysics or in filth, may be fearlessly challenged to match this scene for tragicomic and everlasting truth in the work of Sardou or Ibsen, of the bisexual George Eliot or the masculine "Miss Mævia Mannish." M. Zola, had he imagined it, as undoubtedly his potent and indisputable genius might have done, must have added a flavour of blood and a savour of ordure which would hardly have gratified or tickled the nostrils and the palate of Dickens: but it is impossible that this insular delicacy or prudery of relish and of sense may not be altogether a pitiable infirmity or a derisible defect. Every scene in which Mr. Inspector or Miss Abbey Potterson figures is as lifelike as it could be if it were foul instead of fair—if it were as fetid with the reek of malodorous realism as it is fragrant with the breath of kindly and homely nature.

The fragmentary "Mystery of Edwin Drood" has things in it worthy of Dickens at his best: whether the completed work would probably have deserved a place among his best must always be an open question. It is certain that if Shakespeare had completed "The Two Noble Kinsmen"; if Hugo had completed "Les Jumeaux"; or if Thackeray had completed "Denis Duval," the world would have been richer by a deathless and classic masterpiece. It is equally certain that the grim and tragic humours of the opium den and the boy-devil are worthy of the author of "Barnaby Rudge," that the leading vil-

lain is an original villain of great promise, and that the interest which assuredly, for the average reader, is not awakened in Mr. Drood and Miss Bud is naturally aroused by the sorrows and perils of the brother and sister whose history is interwoven with theirs. It is uncertain beyond all reach of reasonable conjecture whether the upshot of the story would have been as satisfactory as the conclusion, for instance, of "David Copperfield" or "Martin Chuzzlewit," or as far from satisfactory as the close of "Little Dorrit" or "Dombey and Son."

If Dickens had never in his life undertaken the writing of a long story, he would still be great among the immortal writers of his age by grace of his matchless excellence as a writer of short stories. His earlier Christmas books might well suffice for the assurance of a lasting fame; and the best of them are far surpassed in excellence by his contributions to the Christmas numbers of his successive magazines. We remember the noble "Chimes," the delightful "Carol," the entrancing "Cricket on the Hearth," the delicious Tetterbys who make "The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain" immortal and unghostly, and even the good stolid figure of Clemency Newcome, which redeems from the torpid peace of absolute nonentity so nearly complete a failure as "The Battle of Life"; but the Christmas work done for "Household Words" and "All the Year Round" is at its best on a higher level than the best of these. "The Wreck of the Golden Mary" is the work of a genius till then unimaginable—a Defoe with a human heart. More lifelike or more accurate in seamanship, more noble and natural in manhood, it could not have been if the soul of Shakespeare or of Hugo had entered into the somewhat inhuman or at least insensitive genius which begot Robinson Crusoe or Moll Flanders. Among the others every reader will always have his special favourites: I do not say his chosen favourites; he will not choose but find them; it is not a question to be settled by judgment but by instinct. All are as good of their kind as they need be: children and schoolboys, soldiers and sailors, showmen and waiters, landladies and cheap jacks, signalmen and cellarmen: all of them actual and convincing, yet all of them sealed of the tribe of Dickens; real if ever any figures in any book were real, yet as unmistakable in their paternity as the children of Chaucer, of Shakespeare, or of

Fielding. A modest and honest critic will always, when dealing with questions of preference in such matters, be guided by the example of the not always exemplary Mr. Jingle—"Not presume to dictate, but broiled fowl and mushrooms—capital thing!" He may in that case indicate his own peculiar addiction to the society of Toby Magsman and Mr. Chops, Captain Jorgan, Mr. Christopher (surely one of the most perfect figures ever drawn and coloured by such a hand as Shakespeare's or Dekker's or Sterne's or Thackeray's), Mrs. Lirriper and Major Jackman, Dr. Marigold, and Barbox Brothers. The incredible immensity, measurable by no critic ever born, of such a creative power as was needed to call all these into immortal life would surely, had Dickens never done any work on a larger scale of invention and construction, have sufficed for a fame great enough to deserve the applause and the thanksgiving of all men worthy to acclaim it, and the contempt of such a Triton of the minnows as Matthew Arnold. A man whose main achievement in creative literature was to make himself by painful painstaking into a sort of pseudo-Wordsworth could pay no other tribute than that of stolid scorn to a genius of such inexhaustible force and such indisputable originality as that of Charles Dickens. . . .

These Christmas numbers are not, because of their small bulk, to be classed among the minor works of Dickens: they are gems as costly as any of the larger in his crown of fame. Of his lesser works the best and most precious is beyond all question or comparison "The Uncommercial Traveller," a book which would require another volume of the same size to praise it adequately or aright. Not that there are not other short studies as good as its very best among the "Reprinted Pieces" which preserve for us and for all time the beloved figure of Our Bore, the less delightful figures of the noble savage and the begging-letter writer, the pathetic plaint of Mr. Meek, and the incomparable studies and stories of the detective police. We could perhaps dispense with "Pictures from Italy," and even with "American Notes," except for the delicious account or narrative or description of seasickness, which will always give such exquisite intensity of rapture to boys born impervious to that ailment and susceptible only of enjoyment in rough weather at sea as can hardly be rivalled by

the delight of man or boy in Mrs. Gamp herself. But there is only one book which I cannot but regret that Dickens should have written; and I cannot imagine what evil imp, for what inscrutable reason in the unjustifiable designs of a malevolent Providence, was ever permitted to suggest to him the perpetration of "A Child's History of England." I would almost as soon train up a child on Catholic or Calvinistic or servile or disloyal principles as on the cheap-jack radicalism which sees nothing to honour or love or revere in history, and ought therefore to confess that it can in reason pretend to see nothing on which to build any hope of patriotic advance or progressive endurance in the future.

DICKENS'S TREATMENT OF LIFE.

BY

GILBERT K. CHESTERTON.

CONSIDERED merely as literary fashions, romanticism and realism are both tricks, and tricks alone. The only advantage lies with romanticism, which is a little less artificial and technical than realism. For the great majority of people here and now do naturally write romanticism, as we see it in a love-letter, or a diary, or a quarrel, and nobody on earth naturally writes realism as we see it in a description by Flaubert. But both are technical dodges and realism only the more eccentric. It is a trick to make things happen harmoniously always, and it is a trick to make them always happen discordantly. It is a trick to make a heroine, in the act of accepting a lover, suddenly aureoled by a chance burst of sunshine, and then to call it romance. But it is quite as much of a trick to make her, in the act of accepting a lover, drop her umbrella, or trip over a hassock, and then call it the bold plain realism of life. If any one wishes to satisfy himself as to how excessively little this technical realism has to do, I do not say with profound reality, but even with casual truth to life, let him make a simple experiment offered to him by tory of literature. Let him ask what is of all Eng-

lish books the book most full of this masterly technical realism, most full of all these arresting details, all these convincing irrelevancies, all these impedimenta of prosaic life; and then as far as truth to life is concerned he will find that it is a story about men as big as houses and men as small as dandelions, about horses with human souls and an island that flew like a balloon.

We can never understand a writer of the old romantic school, even if he is as great and splendid as Dickens is great and splendid, until we realise this preliminary fact to which I have drawn attention. The fact that these merely technical changes are merely technical, and have nothing whatever to do with the force and truth behind. We are bound to find a considerable amount of Dickens's work, especially the pathetic and heroic passages, artificial and pompous. But that is only because we are far enough off his trick or device to see that it is such. Our own trick and device we believe to be as natural as the eternal hills. It is no more natural, even when compared with the Dickens devices, than a rockery is natural, even when compared with a Dutch flower-bed. The time will come when the wildest upheaval of Zolaism, when the most abrupt and colloquial dialogue of Norwegian drama, will appear a fine old piece of charming affectation, a stilted minuet of literature, like little Nell in the churchyard, or the repentance of the white-haired Dombey. All their catchwords will have become catchwords; the professor's explanations of heredity will have the mellow, foolish sound of the villain's curses against destiny. And in that time men will for the first time become aware of the real truth and magnificence of Zola and Ibsen, just as we, if we are wise, are now becoming aware of the real truth and magnificence of Dickens.

This is even more true if we look first at that fundamental optimistic feeling about life, which as it has been often and truly said is the main essence of Dickens. If Dickens's optimism had merely been a matter of happy endings, reconciliations, and orange-flowers, it would be a mere superficial art or craft. But it would not, as in the case discussed above, be in any way more superficial than the pessimism of the modern episode, or short story, which is an affair of bad endings, disillusionments, and arsenic. The truth about life is that joy and sorrow are

mingled in an almost rhythmical alternation like day and night. The whole of optimistic technique consists in the dodge of breaking off the story at dawn, and the whole of pessimistic technique in the art of breaking off the story at dusk. But wherever and whenever mere artists choose to consider the matter ended, the matter is never ended, and the trouble and exultation go on in a design larger than any of ours, neither vanishing at all. Beyond our greatest happiness there lie dangers, and after our greatest dangers there remaineth a rest.

But the element in Dickens which we are forced to call by the foolish and unmanageable word optimism is a very much deeper and more real matter than any question of plot and conclusion. If Mr. Pickwick had been drowned when he fell through the ice; if Mr. Dick Swiveller had never recovered from the fever, these catastrophes might have been artistically inappropriate, but they would not have sufficed to make the stories sad. If Sam Weller had committed suicide from religious difficulties, if Florence Dombey had been murdered (most justly murdered) by Captain Cuttle, the stories would still be the happiest stories in the world. For their happiness is a state of the soul; a state in which our natures are full of the wine of an ancient youth, in which banquets last for ever, and roads lead everywhere, where all things are under the exuberant leadership of faith, hope, and charity, the three gayest of the virtues.

There is, of course, an optimism which is evil and debasing, and to this it must be confessed that Dickens sometimes descends. The worst optimism is that which, in making things comfortable, prevents them from becoming joyful; it bears the same relation to an essential and true optimism that the pleasure of sitting in an arm-chair bears to the pleasure of sitting on a galloping horse. It is the optimism which denies that burning hurts a martyr. More profoundly considered, it may be called the optimism which, in order to give a being more life, denies him his individual life; in order to give him more pleasure, denies him his especial pleasure. It offers the hunter repose, and the student pleasure, and the poet an explanation. Dickens, as I have said, sometimes fell into this. Nothing could be more atrocious, for instance, than his course of action in concluding "David Copperfield" with an ac-

count of the great Micawber at last finding wealth and success as a mayor in Australia. Micawber would never succeed; never ought to succeed; his kingdom was not of this world. His mind to him a kingdom was; he was one of those splendid and triumphant poor, who have the faculty of capturing, without a coin of money or a stroke of work, that ultimate sense of possessing wealth and luxury, which is the only reward of the toils and crimes of the rich. It is but a sentiment after all, this idea of money, and a poor man who is also a poet, like Micawber, may find a short cut to it. To make such a man, after a million mental triumphs over material circumstances, become the mere pauper and dependent of material success, is something more than an artistic blunder: it is a moral lapse; it is a wicked and blasphemous thing to have done. The end of "David Copperfield" is not a happy ending; it is a very miserable ending. To make Micawber a mayor is about as satisfying a termination as it would be to make Sir Lancelot after Arthur's death become a pork-butcher or a millionaire, or to make Enoch Arden grow fat and marry an heiress. There is a satisfaction that is far more depressing than any tragedy. And the essence of it, as I have said, lies in the fact that it violates the real and profound philosophical optimism of the universe, which has given to each thing its incommunicable air and its strange reason for living. It offers instead, another joy or peace which is alien and nauseous; it offers grass to the dog and fire to the fishes. It is, indeed, in the same tradition as that cruel and detestable kindness to animals, which has been one of the disgraces of humanity: from the modern lady who pulls a fat dog on a chain through a crowded highway, back to the Roman Cæsar who fed his horse on wine, and made it a political magistrate.

The same error in an even more irreverent form occurs, of course, in the same book. The essence of the Dickens genius was exaggeration, and in that general sense Dora, in "David Copperfield," may be called an exaggerated character; but she is an extremely real and an extremely agreeable character for all that. She is supposed to be very weak and ineffectual, but she has about a hundred times more personal character than all Dickens's waxwork heroines put together, the unendurable Agnes by no means excluded. It almost passes comprehension how a man who

could conceive such a character should so insult it, as Dickens does, in making Dora recommend her husband's second marriage with Agnes. Dora, who stands for the profound and exquisite irrationality of simple affection, is made the author of a piece of priggish and dehumanised rationalism which is worthy of Miss Agnes herself. One could easily respect such a husband when he married again, but surely not such a wife when she desired it. The truth is, of course, that here again Dickens is following his evil genius which bade him make those he loved comfortable instead of happy. It may seem at first sight a paradox to say that the special fault of optimism is a lack of faith in God: but so it is. There are some whom we should not seek to make comfortable: their appeasement is in more awful hands. There are conflicts, the reconciliation of which lies beyond the powers not only of human effort but of human rational conception. One of them is the reconciliation between good and evil themselves in the scheme of nature; another is the reconciliation of Dora and Agnes. To say that we know they will be reconciled is faith; to say that we see that they will be reconciled is blasphemy.

Dickens was, of course, as is repeated *ad nauseam*, a caricaturist, and when we have understood this word we have understood the whole matter; but in truth the word caricaturist is commonly misunderstood; it is even, in the case of men like Dickens, used as implying a reproach. Whereas it has no more reproach in it than the word organist. Caricature is not merely an important form of art; it is a form of art which is often most useful for purposes of profound philosophy and powerful symbolism. The age of scepticism put caricature into ephemeral *feuilletons*; but the ages of faith built caricatures into their churches of everlasting stone. One extraordinary idea has been constantly repeated, the idea that it is very easy to make a mere caricature of anything. As a matter of fact it is extraordinarily difficult, for it implies a knowledge of what part of a thing to caricature. To reproduce the proportions of a face, exactly as they are, is a comparatively safe adventure; to arrange those features in an entirely new proportion, and yet retain a resemblance, argues a very delicate instinct for what features are really the characteristic and essential ones. Caricature is only easy when it so happens that the people depicted, like Cyrano

de Bergerac, are more or less caricatures themselves. In other words, caricature is only easy when it does not caricature very much. But to see an ordinary intelligent face in the street, and to know that, with the nose three times as long and the head twice as broad, it will still be a startling likeness, argues a profound insight into truth. "Caricature," said Sir Willoughby Patterne, in his fatuous way, "is rough truth." It is not; it is subtle truth. This is what gives Dickens his unquestionable place among artists. He realised thoroughly a certain phase or atmosphere of existence, and he knew the precise strokes and touches that would bring it home to the reader. That Dickens phase or atmosphere may be roughly defined as the phase of a vivid sociability in which every man becomes unusually and startlingly himself. A good caricature will sometimes seem more like the original than the original; so it is in the greatest moments of social life. He is an unfortunate man, a man unfitted to value life and certainly unfitted to value Dickens, who has not sat at some table or talked in some company in which every one was in character, each a beautiful caricature of himself.

DICKENS AS AN EDUCATIONAL REFORMER.

BY

JAMES L. HUGHES.

DICKENS has a double claim to greatness. He was great as a novelist; he was even greater as a reformer and leader in educational, social, and industrial progress. He made the overthrow of injustice and tyranny and ignorance and conventional wrong-doing the supreme motive of his life. In all his books written after "Pickwick Papers," he dealt with vital problems of human development. The freedom of the common people, the betterment of the condition of the poor, the reform of abuses in court procedure, the amendment of the laws relating to capital punishment and

imprisonment for debt, the exposure of child starvation and other cruelties practised in public charitable institutions, the outrageous treatment of the insane in asylums, the injustice of the dominant classes, the cruel indifference of capitalists in regard to the best interests of their workmen, the positive and negative shortcomings of those in the church who grossly misrepresented Christ, and especially the improper methods of training children in homes, schools, and institutions—these are the great issues to which he so earnestly devoted his life.

His novels were written for a higher purpose than mere entertainment or literary art. He aimed to arouse the heart of the world and fill it with strong, true emotions in regard to the most pathetic and most obstructive conditions of his time. He did not discuss great principles abstractly, but embodied them in the lives of real characters. This objective realisation of emotion and thought and wrong custom influenced millions instead of the hundreds who might have been guided by philosophic treatises dealing with the same subjects.

Dickens was England's greatest educational reformer. He was a careful and sympathetic student of Froebel. In 1855 he wrote an article of eleven columns in "Household Words" explaining most profoundly the physical, intellectual, and spiritual influence of the kindergarten. A single quotation will indicate the general character of this remarkable article: "There would be fewer sullen, quarrelsome, dull-witted men or women if there were fewer children starved or fed improperly in heart and brain. To improve society—to make men and women better—it is requisite to begin quite at the beginning, and to secure for them a wholesome education during infancy and childhood. Strongly possessed with this idea, and feeling that the usual methods of education by restraint and penalty aim at the accomplishment of far too little, and by checking natural development even do positive mischief, Froebel determined upon the devotion of his entire energy throughout his life to a strong effort for the establishment of schools that should do justice and honour to the nature of a child."

The deliberate purpose of Dickens to be an educational reformer is proved by the fact that he discussed twenty-eight schools in his writings, and further described a real

school in "American Notes." He also introduced several tutors and governesses: Mr. Pocket, George Silverman, Canon Crisparkle, Mrs. General, Miss Lane, and Ruth Pinch. In addition to his long list of schools and teachers, Dickens made a host of children leading characters in his novels, in every case with the definite aim of impressing the duty of society or of individuals in regard to some phase of child training.

Oliver Twist's experiences forced civilised countries to take action in regard to the way children were abused and starved in public institutions. Smike did more to arouse universal sympathy for childhood than any other character in literature. Little Nell revealed the peculiar effect upon a child of living with old people even though they were very fond of her. Paul Dombey was described to show the folly of trying to force a delicate, oversensitive child to study books, instead of allowing him a free life in the open air to develop his weak body and bring it and his naturally too active brain into harmonious action. Florence Dombey represented the misunderstood child whose heart was breaking from lack of true sympathy with her parents. Steerforth was a fine psychological study of a boy possessed naturally of every element of power necessary to make him a strong, true leader, whose life was wrecked by the misdirected love of his mother. It is a work of high art to show that the influence which should have been the strongest in forming a high character became the chief cause of its weakness and debasement. The Jellybys showed how children are too often neglected at home for so-called Christian work, and in the same book the Pardiggles suffer from the still heavier curse of too much pious attention of an unnatural kind from their mother. Poor Jo and George Silverman were described to unfold the law of apperception. When George was taken from the cellar in which his childhood was spent, he had only four centres of experience—hunger, thirst, cold, and fear. Poor Jo was a deeper psychological study because he was represented as possessing naturally the centres of spiritual power, though almost entirely lacking in intellectual centres. Richard Carstone represented the large class who fail in life because they do not find their proper sphere. Dickens seems to have caught Froebel's ideal of child study, for he made Esther say, "I did doubt whether

Richard would not have profited by some one studying him a little, instead of his studying Latin verses so much." The Gradgrind children were used to make plain the terrible evils which result from forcing adulthood upon childhood, the dwarfing of the imagination, and the rigid formal discipline of many otherwise good homes. Jemmy Larriper's training was given as ideal, exactly opposite to that of the Gradgrind children.

There is scarcely a phase of the best modern educational ideals that Dickens failed to illustrate by realistic character development. Squeers, Creakle, Bumble, Mrs. Gargery, Mr. Murdstone and his sister Jane, John Willet, Mr. Podsnap, Mrs. Clennam, Mrs. Pipchin, and many similar characters exemplified the blighting effects of coercion in varied forms in homes, schools, and institutions. He condemned even the placid coercive will of sweet old Mrs. Crisparkle, believing it to be as destructive of individual character as the coarse, brutal coercion of Squeers. In one of his ideal schools, Dr. Strong's, there was "plenty of liberty."

No other book has dealt so mercilessly or so exhaustively with cramming as "Dombey and Son." Paul and Toots and Briggs and Tozer and Bitherstone on the one hand, and Doctor Blimber, Cornelia Blimber, and Mr. Feeder, B.A., the "human barrel organ playing over his little list of tunes," on the other, made objective all the evils and absurdities of cram. The destruction of natural, self-active interest, the degradation of the highest literary study to mere "word grinding," the knocking out of the brains against the hard mathematics, the deterioration of intellectual force with the coming of whiskers, the dwarfing of individuality and the loss of physical power through cramming were all made to stand out clearly as warnings against the old methods of training.

Dickens understood the theory of epoch stages of growth and the imperative need of allowing a child to have a real childhood. "It always grieves me," he said, in speaking of Little Nell, "to contemplate the initiation of children into the ways of life, when they are scarcely more than infants." Tom Pinch's sister taught "a premature little woman thirteen years old, who had arrived at such a pitch of whalebone and education that she had nothing girlish about her." Doctor Blimber regarded his boys "as if they

were born grown up." Mr. Grewgious said of himself, "I half believe I was born advanced in life." Edith Skewton said to her artificial mother, "When was I a child? What childhood did you ever leave me? The germ of all that purifies a woman's breast, and makes it true and good, has never stirred in mine." Mr. Gradgrind is described as "a cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts and prepared to blow children clean out of the region of childhood at one discharge." The young Gradgrinds "had been lectured at from their tenderest years, coursed like little hares. Almost as soon as they could run alone they had been made to run to the lecture room." "There was only one child in the Smallweed family for several generations. Little old men there were, but no child, until Mr. Smallweed's grandmother became weak in her intellect and fell into a childish state." A child was described in "The Haunted Man" who was "a baby savage, a young monster, a child who had never been a child." Mr. Jackson in "Barbox Brothers" said, "I am to myself an unintelligible book, with the earlier chapters all torn out and thrown away. My childhood had no grace of childhood, my youth had no charm of youth, and what can be expected from such a lost beginning?" The saddest sight in the world to Dickens was a child such as he pictured in "A Tale of Two Cities." "The children of Saint Antoine had ancient faces and grave voices." He longed to give them a genuine childhood, and to keep them as he described them in Phoebe's school, "merry little Robins."

Dickens taught the value of the development of individuality in each child. Esther criticised severely "the system which addressed hundreds of boys, all varying in character and capacity, in the same way." Mr. Podsnap could not understand why children, "properly born and bred, could not be exactly put away like the plate, brought out like the plate, polished like the plate, counted, weighed, and valued like the plate." Mrs. General, too, considered education to be a mere superficial polishing. "She dipped the smallest of brushes into the largest of pots, and varnished the surface," absolutely indifferent to the individuality of her pupils. Mr. M'Choakumchild "and some one hundred and forty other schoolmasters" were "turned at the same time, in the same factory, on the same principles, like so many pianoforte legs." At the Grinders'

school "boys were taught as parrots are." In Doctor Blimber's school "nature was of no consequence at all; no matter what a boy was intended to bear, Doctor Blimber made him bear to pattern somehow or other." Bradley Headstone's "school buildings, school teachers, and school pupils were all according to pattern, and all engendered in the light of the latest Gospel according to Monotony." His most suggestive criticism of neglect of individuality is the description of Eugene Wrayburn's father, who used to decide within a few months or hours of the birth of his sons what their sphere of life work should be, making one a "pillar of the church (a very shaky one), another a circumnavigator (pitchforked into the navy but never circumnavigated), another a lawyer, another a mechanical genius," and so on, and failures of them all. Dickens pleaded for life as a working out of the highest power of each individual. He believed with Froebel that true education is "making the inner outer."

Dickens reached his highest educational development in "Hard Times," which is on the whole the best work of any English educator. In it are the strongest pleas for the development of the child's imagination, and the enrichment of his mind by all the symbolic experiences of a perfect childhood, as the only basis for a happy and productive adulthood. Mr. Gradgrind's children studied facts and ologies from their infancy, but they were never allowed to hear fairy tales, or to believe in Santa Claus, or to read poetry. No cow ever jumped over the moon for them; they never heard of "the cow with the crumpled horn that tossed the dog that worried the cat that killed the rat that ate the malt that lay in the house that Jack built." Mr. Gradgrind's children were taught that "a cow is a graminivorous, ruminating quadruped." They were never allowed to fancy. "Now what I want is facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon facts." To Sissy Jupe he said at the examination, "But you mustn't fancy—you are never to fancy." "Tom Gradgrind's imagination was strangled in his cradle, and its ghost appeared in later years in the form of grovelling sensuality." The element intended to give grace and strength and purity and insight brought degradation and overthrow of every true element of char-

acter. The deepest thought relating to child training underlies the sketch of Tom Gradgrind. When Louisa, so beautiful and strong in childhood, so weak in essential character in womanhood, came to reveal her weakness to her father, she said, "Father, if you had known, would you have doomed me at any time to the frost and blight that have hardened and spoiled me? Would you have robbed me—for no one's enrichment, only for the greater desolation of this world—of the immaterial part of my life, the spring and summer of my belief, my refuge from what is sordid and bad in the real things around me? Yet, father, if I had been stone-blind; if I had groped my way by the sense of touch and had been free, while I knew the shapes and surfaces of things, to exercise my fancy somewhat in regard to them, I should have been a million times wiser, happier, more loving, more contented, more innocent and human, in all good respects, than I am." Dickens showed clearly in this and many similar statements in "Hard Times" how definitely he understood the most profound psychological truth yet revealed to man, that the full and true development of the imagination is the central element in intellectual and spiritual power. Speaking of Louisa, he said, "The dreams of childhood—its airy fables, its graceful, beautiful, humane, impossible adornments of the world beyond, so good to be believed in once, so good to be remembered when outgrown—what had she to do with these? Remembrances of how she had journeyed to the little that she knew by the enchanted roads of what she and millions of innocent creatures had hoped and imagined, of how, first coming upon reason through the tender light of fancy, she had seen it a beneficent god, not a grim idol, cruel and cold—what had she to do with these?" In several other books, and especially in the training of Jemmy Lirriper, Dickens impressed the absolute need of a rich development of the imagination in childhood.

Dickens, like Froebel, had a perfect sympathy *with* childhood, not merely *for* it. In this respect he was a model for all parents and teachers. He was the first reformer who dared to assert that a child had a right to resist his own father. Charles Cheeryble said to Nicholas Nickleby when speaking of Smike, "If Nature, in such a case, put into that lad's breast but one secret prompting

which urged him towards his father and away from you, she would be a liar and an idiot." Dickens should receive a large share of credit for the fact that civilised countries now protect children from the injustice and cruelty of their parents.

The great purpose of Dickens was nowhere more clearly manifested or more completely successful than in the work he did for the deaf and dumb, the blind, the mentally defective, and the neglected children of the poor. Doctor Marigold should be one of the best loved of all the characters Dickens made so real. His teaching of little Sophy, the deaf-mute, was the first revelation of duty to this neglected class to the English people who have since so nobly assumed their full responsibility. Caleb Plummer and his blind daughter awakened a deep interest in blind children. So did the sympathetic description given by Dickens of Dr. Howe's work in Boston, especially with Laura Bridgman. He pleaded for the mentally defective, especially in "Barnaby Rudge." But his strongest and most persistent pleas were for the thousands of neglected children who were in his time forced into lives of ignorance, crime, and suffering even in Christian England. "I can find—must find, whether I will or no—in the open streets, shameful instances of the neglect of children, intolerable toleration of the engendernent of paupers, idlers, thieves, races of wretched and destructive cripples both in body and mind; a misery to themselves, a misery to the community, a disgrace to civilisation, and an outrage on Christianity." Thus he forced home responsibility. He urged the education of the little ones of the streets, claiming that "it would clear London streets of the most terrible objects they smite the sight with—myriads of little children who awfully reverse our Saviour's words, and are not of the kingdom of Heaven, but of the kingdom of Hell." Scrooge saw two "wretched, abject, frightful, hideous children" in his dream. "Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked and glared out menacing." "They are man's," said the spirit. "This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree; but most of all beware this boy,

for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the writing be erased."

England, stirred largely by Dickens, has tried hard to erase the writing. In the year of his death the first comprehensive school law was passed, and there are now nearly four million more children of the poor at school in England and Wales than were in attendance when this law was enacted. The blind, the deaf, and the mentally defective, too, had been provided with excellent schools near their own homes by the school-boards of England. How simple an act of justice it is that the grave of England's greatest lover of children should always be strewn with flowers!

DICKENS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE.

BY

FREDERIC HARRISON.

It is a fearsome thing to venture to say anything now about Charles Dickens, whom we have all loved, enjoyed, and laughed over: whose tales are household words in every home where the English tongue is heard, whose characters are our own school-friends, the sentiment of our youthful memories, our boon companions and our early attachments. To view him in any critical light is a task as risky as it would be to discuss the permanent value of some fashionable amusement, a favourite actor, a popular beverage, or a famous horse. Millions and millions of old and young love Charles Dickens, know his personages by heart, play at games with his incidents and names, and from the bottom of their souls believe that there never was such fun, and that there never will be conceived again such inimitable beings, as they find in his ever-fresh and ever-varied pages. This is by itself a very high title to honour; perhaps it is the chief jewel in the crown that rests on the head of Charles Dickens. I am myself one of these devotees, of these lovers, of these slaves of his: or at least I can remember that I have been. To have stirred this pure and

natural humanity, this force of sympathy, in such countless millions is a great triumph. Men and women to-day do not want any criticism of Charles Dickens, any talk about him at all. They enjoy him as he is: they examine one another in his books: they gossip on by the hour about his innumerable characters, his never-to-be-forgotten waggeries and fancies.

No account of Victorian literature can omit the name of Charles Dickens from the famous writers of the time. How could we avoid notice of one whose first immortal tale coincides with the accession of Queen Victoria, and who for thirty-three successive years continued to pour out a long stream of books that still delight the English-speaking world? When we begin to talk about the permanent place in English literature of eminent writers, one of the first definite problems is presented by Charles Dickens. And it is one of the most obscure of such problems; because, more than almost any writer of our age, Charles Dickens has his own accustomed nook at every fireside: he is a familiar friend, a welcome guest; we remember the glance of his eye; we have held his hand, as it were, in our own. The children brighten up as his step is heard; the chairs are drawn round the hearth, and a fresh glow is given to the room. We do not criticise one whom we love, nor do we suffer others to do so. And there is perhaps a wider sympathy with Charles Dickens as a person than with any other writer of our time. For this reason there has been hardly any serious criticism or estimate of Dickens as a great artist, apart from some peevish and sectional disparagement of his genius, which has been too much tinged with academic pedantry and the bias of aristocratic temper or political antagonism.

I am free to confess that I am in no mood to pretend making up my mind for any impartial estimate of Charles Dickens as an abiding power in English literature. The "personal equation" is in my own case somewhat too strong to leave me with a perfectly "dry light" in the matter. I will make a clean breast of it at once by saying, that I can remember reading some of the most famous of these books in their green covers, month by month, as they came out in parts, when I was myself a child or "in my teens." That period included the first ten of the main works from "Pickwick" down to "David Copperfield."

With "Bleak House," which I read as a student of philosophy at Oxford beginning to be familiar with Aristotelian canons, I felt my enjoyment mellowed by a somewhat more measured judgment. From that time onward Charles Dickens threw himself into a great variety of undertakings and many diverse kinds of publication. His "Hard Times," "Little Dorrit," "Our Mutual Friend," "Great Expectations," "Tale of Two Cities," were never to me anything like the wonder and delight that I found in "Oliver Twist," "Nickleby," and "Copperfield." And as to the short tales and the later pieces down to "Edwin Drood," I never find myself turning back to them; the very memory of the story is fading away; and I fail to recall the characters and names. A mature judgment will decide that the series after "David Copperfield," written when the author was thirty-eight, was not equal to the series of the thirteen years preceding. Charles Dickens will always be remembered by "Pickwick," "Oliver Twist," "Nickleby," and "Copperfield." And though these tales will long continue to delight both old and young, learned and unlearned alike, they are most to be envied who read him when young, and they are most to be pitied who read him with a critical spirit. May that be far from us, as we take up our "Pickwick" and talk over the autobiographic pathos of "David Copperfield."

This vivid sympathy with the man is made stronger in my own case in that, from my own boyhood till his death, I was continually seeing him, was frequently his neighbour both in London and the seaside, knew some of his friends, and heard much about him and about his work. Though I never spoke to him, there were times when I saw him almost daily; I heard him speak and read in public; and his favourite haunts in London and the country have been familiar to me from my boyhood. And thus, as I read again my "Pickwick," and "Nickleby," and "Copperfield," there come back to me many personal and local memories of my own. The personality of Charles Dickens was, even to his distant readers, vivid and intense; and hence it is much more so to those who have known his person. I am thus an ardent Pickwickian myself; and anything I say about our immortal Founder must be understood in a Pickwickian sense.

Charles Dickens was before all things a great humorist

—doubtless the greatest of his century; for, though we may find in Scott a more truly Shakespearean humour of the highest order, the humour of Dickens is so varied, so paramount, so inexhaustible, that he stands forth in our memory as the humorist of the age. Swift, Fielding, Hogarth, Sterne, and Goldsmith reached at times a more enduring level of humour without caricature; but the gift has been more rarely imparted to their successors in the age of steam. Now, we shall never get an adequate definition of that imponderable term—humour—a term which, perhaps, was invented to be the eternal theme of budding essayists. We need not be quite as liberal in our interpretation of humour as was Thackeray in opening his "English Humourists"; for he declared that its business was to awaken and direct our love, our pity, our kindness, our scorn for imposture, our tenderness for the weak, to comment on the actions and passions of life, to be the week-day preacher—and much more to that effect. But it may serve our immediate purpose to say with Samuel Johnson that humour is "grotesque imagery"; and "grotesque" is "distorted of figure; unnatural." That is to say, humour is an effort of the imagination presenting human nature with some element of distortion or disproportion which instantly kindles mirth. It must be imaginative; it must touch the bed-rock of human nature; it must arouse merriment and not anger or scorn. In this fine and most rare gift Charles Dickens abounded to overflowing; and this humour poured in perfect cataracts of "grotesque imagery" over every phase of life of the poor and the lower middle classes of his time, in London and a few of its suburbs and neighbouring parts.

This in itself is a great title to honour; it is his main work, his noblest title. His sphere was wide, but not at all general; it was strictly limited to the range of his own indefatigable observations. He hardly ever drew a character or painted a scene, even of the most subordinate kind, which he had not studied from the life with minute care, and whenever he did for a moment wander out of his limits, he made an egregious failure. But this task of his, to cast the sunshine of pathos and of genial mirth over the humblest, dullest, and most uninviting of our fellow-creatures, was a great social mission to which his whole genius was devoted. No waif and stray was so repulsive,

no drudge was so mean, no criminal was so atrocious, but what Charles Dickens could feel for him some ray of sympathy, or extract some pathetic mirth out of his abject state. And Dickens does not look on the mean and the vile as do Balzac and Zola, that is, from without, like the detective or the surgeon. He sees things more or less from their point of view: he feels with the Marchioness: he himself as a child was once a Smike: he cannot help liking the fun of the Artful Dodger: he has been a good friend to Barkis: he likes Traddles: he loves Jo: poor Nancy ends her vile life in heroism: and even his brute of a dog worships Bill Sikes.

Here lies the secret of his power over such countless millions of readers. He not only paints a vast range of ordinary humanity and suffering or wearied humanity, but he speaks for it and lives in it himself, and throws a halo of imagination over it, and brings home to the great mass of average readers a new sense of sympathy and gaiety. This humane kinship with the vulgar and the common, this magic which strikes poetry out of the dust of the streets, and discovers traces of beauty and joy in the most monotonous of lives, is, in the true and best sense of the term, Christlike, with a message and gospel of hope. Thackeray must have had Charles Dickens in his mind when he wrote: "The humorous writer professes to awaken and direct your love, your pity, your kindness—your scorn for untruth, pretension, imposture—your tenderness for the weak, the poor, the oppressed, the unhappy." Charles Dickens, of all writers of our age, assuredly did this in every work of his pen, for thirty-three years of incessant production. It is his great title to honour; and a novelist can desire no higher title than this.

There is another quality in which Charles Dickens is supreme—in purity. Here is a writer who is realistic, if ever any writer was, in the sense of having closely observed the lowest strata of city life, who has drawn the most miserable outcasts, the most abandoned men and women in the dregs of society, who has invented many dreadful scenes of passion, lust, seduction, and debauchery; and yet in forty works and more you will not find a page which a mother need withhold from her grown daughter. As Thackeray wrote of his friend: "I am grateful for the innocent laughter and the sweet and unsullied page which

the author of 'David Copperfield' gives to my children." We need not formulate any dogma or rule on such a topic, nor is it essential that all books should be written *virginibus puerisque*; but it is certain that every word of Charles Dickens was so written, even when he set himself (as he sometimes did) to describe animal natures and the vilest of their sex. Dickens is a realist in that he probes the gloomiest recesses and faces the most disheartening problems of life: he is an idealist in that he never presents us the common or the vile with mere commonplace or repulsiveness, and without some ray of humane and genial charm to which ordinary eyes are blind. Dickens, then was above all things a humorist, an inexhaustible humorist, to whom the humblest forms of daily life wore a certain sunny air of genial mirth; but the question remains if he was a humorist of the highest order: was he a poet, a creator of abiding imaginative types? Old Johnson's definition of humour as "grotesque imagery," and "grotesque" as meaning some distortion in figure, may not be adequate as a description of humour, but it well describes the essential feature of Charles Dickens. His infallible instrument is caricature—which strictly means an "overload," as Johnson says, "an exaggerated resemblance." Caricature is a likeness having some comical exaggeration or distortion. Now, caricature is a legitimate and potent instrument of humour, which great masters have used with consummate effect. Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Rembrandt, Hogarth, use it; but only at times, and in a subsidiary way. Rabelais, Swift, Fielding, use this weapon not unfrequently; Shakespeare very sparingly; Goldsmith and Scott, I think, almost never. . . .

Now, with Charles Dickens caricature—that comical exaggeration of a particular feature, distortion of some part beyond nature—is not only the essence of his humour, but it is the universal and ever-present source of his mirth. It would not be true to say that exaggeration is the sole form of humour that he uses, but there is hardly a character of his to which it is not applied, nor a scene of which it is not the pervading "motive." Some feature, some oddity, some temperament is seized, dwelt upon, played with, and turned inside out, with incessant repetition and unwearied energy. Every character, except the walking gentleman and the walking lady, the insipid lover, or the colourless

riend, has some feature thrust out of proportion, magnified beyond nature. Sam Weller never speaks without his anecdote, Uriah is always "'umble," Barkis is always "willin'," Mark Tapley is always "jolly," Dombey is always solemn, and Toots is invariably idiotic. It is no doubt natural that Barnaby's Raven should always want tea, whatever happens, for the poor bird has but a limited vocabulary. But one does not see why articulate and sane persons like Captain Cuttle, Pecksniff, and Micawber should repeat the same phrases under every condition and to all persons. This, no doubt, is the essence of farce: it may be irresistibly droll as farce, but it does not rise beyond farce. And at last even the most enthusiastic Pickwickian wearies of such monotony of iteration.

Now, the keynote of caricature being the distortion of nature, it inevitably follows that humorous exaggeration is unnatural, however droll; and, where it is the main source of the drollery, the picture as a whole ceases to be within the bounds of nature. But the great masters of the human heart invariably remain true to nature; not merely true to a selected feature, but to the natural form as a whole. Falstaff, in his wildest humour, speaks and acts as such a man really might speak and act. He has no catch-phrase on which he harps, as if he were a talking-machine wound up to emit a dozen sounds. Parson Adams speaks and acts as such a being might do in nature. The comic characters of Goldsmith, Scott, or Thackeray do not outrun and defy nature, nor does their drollery depend on any special and abnormal feature, much less on any stock phrase which they use as a label. The illustrations of Cruikshank and Phiz are delightfully droll, and often caricatures of a high order. But being caricatures they overload and exaggerate nature, and indeed are always, in one sense, impossible in nature. The grins, the grimaces, the contortions, the dwarfs, the idiots, the monstrosities of these wonderful sketches could not be found in human beings constructed on any known anatomy. And Dickens's own characters have the same element of unnatural distortion. It is possible that these familiar caricatures have even done harm to his reputation. His creations are of a higher order of art and are more distinctly spontaneous and original. But the grotesque sketches with which he almost uniformly presented his books accentuate the ele-

ment of caricature on which he relied; and often add an unnatural extravagance beyond that extravagance which was the essence of his own method.

The consequence is that everything in Dickens is "in the excess," as Aristotle would say, and not "in the mean." Whether it is Tony Weller, or "the Shepherd," or the Fat Boy, Hugh or the Raven, Toots or Traddles, Micawber or Skimpole, Gamp or Mantalini—all are overloaded in the sense that they exceed nature, and are more or less extravagant. They are wonderful and delightful caricatures, but they are impossible in fact. The similes are hyperbolic; the names are grotesque; the incidents partake of harlequinade, and the speeches of roaring farce. It is often wildly droll, but it is rather the drollery of the stage than of the book. The characters are never possible in fact; they are not, and are not meant to be, nature; they are always and everywhere comic distortions of nature. Goldsmith's Dr. Primrose tells us that he chose his wife for the same qualities for which she chose her wedding gown. That is humour, but it is also pure, literal, exact truth to nature. David Copperfield's little wife is called a lap-dog, acts like a lap-dog, and dies like a lap-dog; the lap-dog simile is so much overdone that we are glad to get rid of her, and instead of weeping with Copperfield, we feel disposed to call him a ninny.

Nothing is more wonderful in Dickens than his exuberance of animal spirits, that inexhaustible fountain of life and gaiety, in which he equals Scott and far surpasses any other modern. The intensity of the man, his electric activity, his spasmodic nervous power, quite dazzle and stun us. But this restless gaiety too often grows fatiguing, as the rollicking fun begins to pall upon us, as the jokes ring hollow, and the wit gets stale by incessant reiteration. We know how much in real life we get to hate the joker who does not know when to stop, who repeats his jests, and forces the laugh when it does not flow freely. Something of the kind the most devoted of Dickens's readers feel when they take in too much at one time. None but the very greatest can maintain for long one incessant outpour of drollery, much less of extravagance. Aristophanes could do it; Shakespeare could do it; so could Cervantes; and so, too, Rabelais. But then, the wildest extravagance of these men is so rich, so varied, so charged with insight

and thought, and, in the case of Rabelais, so resplendent with learning and suggestion, that we never feel satiety and the cruel sense that the painted mask on the stage is grinning at us, whilst the actor behind it is weary and sad. When one who is not amongst the very greatest pours forth the same inextinguishable laughter in the same key, repeating the same tricks, and multiplying kindred oddities, people of cultivation enjoy it heartily once, twice, it may be a dozen times, but at last they make way for the young bloods who can go thirty-seven times to see "Charley's Aunt."

A good deal has been said about Dickens's want of reading; and his enthusiastic biographer very fairly answers that Charles Dickens's book was the great book of life, of which he was an indefatigable student. When other men were at school and at college, he was gathering up a vast experience of the hard world, and when his brother writers were poring over big volumes in their libraries, he was pacing up and down London and its suburbs with inexhaustible energy, drinking in oddities, idiosyncrasies, and wayside incidents at every pore. It is quite true: London is a microcosm, an endless and bottomless Babylon; which, perhaps, no man has ever known so well as did Charles Dickens. This was his library; here he gathered that vast encyclopædia of human nature, which some are inclined to call "cockney," but if it be, "Cockayne" must be a very large country indeed. Still, the fact remains, that of book-learning of any kind Dickens remained, to the end of his days, perhaps more utterly innocent than any other famous English writer since Shakespeare. His biographer labours to prove that he had read Fielding and Smollett, "Don Quixote" and "Gil Blas," the "Spectator," and "Robinson Crusoe." Perhaps he had, like most men who have learned to read. But, no doubt, this utter severance from books, which we feel in his tales, will ultimately tell against their immortality.

This rigid abstinence from books, which Dickens practised on system, had another reaction that we notice in his style. Not only do we feel in reading his novels that we have no reason to assume that he had ever read anything except a few popular romances, but we note that he can hardly be said to have a formed literary style of his own. Dickens had mannerisms, but hardly a style. In some ways, this is a good thing: much less can he be said to

have a bad style. It is simply no style. He knows nothing of the crisp, modulated, balanced, and reserved mastery of phrase and sentence which marks Thackeray. Nor is it the easy simplicity of "Robinson Crusoe" and "The Vicar of Wakefield." The tale spins along, and the incidents rattle on with the volubility of a good story-teller who warms up as he goes, but who never stops to think of his sentences and phrases. He often gets verbose, rings the changes on a point which he sees to have caught his hearers; he plays with a fancy out of measure, and turns his jest inside out and over and over, like a fine comic actor when the house is in a roar. His language is free, perfectly clear, often redundant, sometimes grandiloquent, and usually addressed more to the pit than to the boxes. And he is a little prone to slide, even in his own proper person, into those formal courtesies and obsolete compliments which fifty years ago survived amongst the superior orders of bagmen and managing clerks.

There is an old topic of discussion whether Dickens could invent an organic and powerful plot, and carry out an elaborate scheme with perfect skill. It is certain that he has never done so, and it can hardly be said that he has ever essayed it. The serial form in parts, wherein almost all his stories were cast, requiring each number of three chapters to be "assorted," like sugar-plums, with grave and gay, so as to tell just enough but not too much, made a highly wrought scheme almost impossible. It is plain that Charles Dickens had nothing of that epical gift which gave us "Tom Jones" and "Ivanhoe." Perhaps the persistent use of the serial form shows that he felt no interest in that supreme art of an immense drama duly unfolded to a prepared end. In "Pickwick" there neither was, nor could there be, any organic plot. In "Oliver Twist," in "Barnaby Rudge," in "Dombey," in "Bleak House," in the "Tale of Two Cities," there are indications of his possessing this power, and in certain parts of these tales we seem to be in the presence of a great master of epical narration. But the power is not sustained; and it must be confessed that in none of these tales is there a complete and equal scheme. In most of the other books, especially in those after "Bleak House," the plot is so artless, so *décousu*, so confused, that even practised readers of Dickens fail to keep it clear in their mind. The serial form, where a lead-

ing character wanders about to various places, and meets a succession of quaint parties, seems to be that which suited his genius and which he himself most entirely enjoyed.

In contrast with the Pickwickian method of comic rambles in search of human "curios," Dickens introduced some darker effects and persons of a more or less sensational kind. Some of these are as powerful as anything in modern fiction; and Fagin and Bill Sikes, Smike and poor Jo, the Gordon Riots and the storms at sea, may stand beside some tableaux of Victor Hugo for lurid power and intense realism. But it was only at times and during the first half of his career that Dickens could keep clear of melodrama and somewhat stagy blue fire. And at times his blue fire was of a very cheap kind. Rosa Dartle and Carker, Steerforth and Blandois, Quilp and Uriah Heep, have a melancholy glitter of the footlights over them. We cannot see what the villains want, except to look villainous, and we fail to make out where is the danger to the innocent victims. We find the villain of the piece frantically struggling to get some paper, or to get hold of some boy or girl. But as the scene is in London in the nineteenth century, and not in Naples in the fifteenth century, we cannot see who is in real danger, or why, or of what. And with all this, Dickens was not incapable of bathos, or tragedy suddenly exploding in farce. The end of Krook by spontaneous combustion is such a case: but a worse case is the death of Dora, Copperfield's baby wife, along with that of the lap-dog, Jip. This is one of those unforgotten, unpardonable, egregious blunders in art, in feeling, even in decency, which must finally exclude Charles Dickens from the rank of the true immortals.

But his books will long be read for his wonderful successes, and his weaker pieces will entirely be laid aside, as are the failures of so many great men, the rubbish of Fielding, of Goldsmith, of Defoe; which do nothing now to dim the glory of "Tom Jones," "The Vicar of Wakefield," and "Robinson Crusoe." The glory of Charles Dickens will always be in his "Pickwick," his first, his best, his inimitable triumph. It is true that it is a novel without a plot, without beginning, middle, or end, with much more of caricature than of character, with some extravagant tom-foolery, and plenty of vulgarity. But its originality, its irrepressible drolleries, its substantial human nature, and its

intense vitality, place it quite in a class by itself. We can no more group it, or test it by any canon of criticism, than we could group or define "Pantagruel" or "Faust." There are some works of genius which seem to transcend all criticism, of which the very extravagances and incoherences increase the charm. And "Pickwick" ought to live with "Gil Blas" and "Tristram Shandy." In a deeper vein, the tragic scenes in "Oliver Twist" and in "Barnaby Rudge" must long hold their ground, for they can be read and reread in youth, in manhood, in old age. The story of Dotheboys Hall, the Yarmouth memories of Copperfield, little Nell, Mrs. Gamp, Micawber, Toots, Captain Cuttle, Pecksniff, and many more will long continue to delight the youth of the English-speaking races. But few writers are remembered so keenly by certain characters, certain scenes, incidental whimsies, and so little for entire novels treated strictly as works of art. There is no reason whatever for pretending that all these scores of tales are at all to be compared with the best of them, or that the invention of some inimitable scenes and characters is enough to make a supreme and faultless artist. The young and the uncritical make too much of Charles Dickens, when they fail to distinguish between his best and his worst. Their fastidious seniors make too little of him, when they note his many shortcomings and fail to see that in certain elements of humour he has no equal and no rival. If we mean Charles Dickens to live we must fix our eye on these supreme gifts alone.

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"The Strange Gentleman"	1836
"Pickwick Papers"	1836–37
"Oliver Twist"	1837–39
"Sketches of Young Gentlemen"	1838
"Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi"	1838
"Nicholas Nickleby"	1838–39
"Sketches of Young Couples"	1840
"Master Humphrey's Clock," "The Old Curiosity Shop," and "Barnaby Rudge"	1840–41
"American Notes"	1842
"Christmas Carol"	1843
"Martin Chuzzlewit"	1843–44
"The Chimes"	1845
"Cricket on the Hearth"	1846
"Pictures from Italy"	1846
"Battle of Life"	1846
"Dombey and Son"	1846–48
"Haunted Man"	1848
"David Copperfield"	1849–50
"Mr. Nightingale's Diary"	1851
"Child's History of England"	1851–53
"Bleak House"	1852–53

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